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A PLACE TO LIE DOWN

Nelson Algren

Mopin' down the ties, feelin' mighty low
Got to keep movin', got no place to go
Just one more hungry poor sonofabitch
Wond'rin why he goes hungry in a country so rich

TWO HUNGRY BUMS in Texas, mopin' down the S. P. ties. On either side of the tracks stretched the Texas prairie, half-unseen now under a fog. Within the fog a cowbell tinkled, near at hand and coming nearer. The black 'bo drew a battered pack of cigarettes out of his hip pocket.

"Say," he asked his white companion, "You know why they made Ol' Gol's in the first place?"

The white didn't know.

"To keep niggers an' Jews from smokin' camels is why."

They both laughed, without strength, and moped on.

The Negro paused, stood on one leg like a heron, and slipped off his right shoe. His toes were encrusted with a fish-like scale; he rubbed them with gaunt knuckles until brownish chips brittled off onto the ties.

"It itches," he complained, "It itches like the crabs."

The white offered advice: "Y'all ought to wear a white sock on that. On *anythin'* like that."

When they reached El Paso streets were deserted; but morning was breaking over Juarez, and an empty C.C.C. truck rolled past as though to herald an empty dawn.

Neither boy knew where this city's breadline, if any, was to be found; so they walked on aimlessly. Once they paused in a doorway while the Negro removed his shoe once more, and again scraped his knuckles with his toes. Above them an unshaded night bulb still burned feebly, casting a sickly greenish glow across a staircase leading up to nowhere. A woman passed the doorway, head down and hurrying through the rain along the unlovely southern street.

"I'm tired as a old hound, aint you?" the Negro asked as he scraped.

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"Yeah," the other answered, "Bummin' takes all the tallow out o' mah pole. Ah aint been eatin' so reg'lar o' late, neither. What's yore name, nigger?"

"Call me Mack. What's yours?"

"Call me Tex."

"If I jest had a sock like you said, Tex, do y' think it'd keep it from rubbin' some?"

Tex surmised that this must be a northern Negro, to judge by his speech.

The fog lifted a little, and the El Paso sun came through. They came to a park with a picket-fence going around and around; there were teeter-totters for small children and swings for smaller children; and at one end was a net whereon two large men swung and belammed one small red ball. A stretch of grass looked dry for sleep here. The 'boes found a gate, and entered.

The small grass bent itself between Tex McKay's fingers. Long shadows trembled in the light. . . .

"Ah better shake this shine," Tex counseled himself.

Surreptitiously, the Negro began bathing his foot by wriggling his naked toes beneath a dripping bush. He did this for several minutes, covertly, then declared his foot well.

"But a sock. . . . If oney I had a white sock now." His eyes closed even as he muttered, and in a moment he was sleeping soundly, one arm in a ragged sleeve outflung and the other shielding his eyes; as though fearing in sleep to be struck.

"Ah ought to got me a coat fo' the night that's comin'," Tex thought, watching sunshadow between half-closed lids. Sunshadow made him think of wet lengths of yellow ribbon stretched flat aslant the grass to dry. Some lengths were narrow and some were quite wide, some intertwined and became one, then wriggled away into many, all yellow-wet and delicate across green shadowgrass.

The Negro wriggled his toes, in sleep. Tex's own feet had gone sockless for months, he too was very tired; but even as he felt himself dozing off he became aware of someone coming toward him. Then a silver badge above small boots, (a row of brass buttons and a neck on thighs swung up a winding cindered path twirling a club-on-a-cord like a swagger-stick. Tex saw him coming, shoved Mack, and ran. From behind the picket fence, safe outside, Tex watched. Boots budged Mack until he rolled over, moaning like a sick man. He was sweating

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in sleep, his mouth drooled saliva, then he woke with a start, his eyes budging out; there was, for one moment, no flicker of understanding in his eyes.

"White-folks' park, nigger. Git a-goin' 'for ah fan yore fanny."

He twirled his club-on-a-cord significantly, boy-fashion, threatening.

Tex waited on the street. He'd like to josh the nigger a little now. But when the Negro joined him they walked on silently, and Tex said nothing at all.

On a street lined with radios competitively blasting the air into splinters, they sat down on a Keep-Our-City Clean box. Both were hungry enough to chew their tongues; but they were both too weary to think consistently even about food. Tex rested his feet on the curbstone and watched the gutterflow swirl past.

Much was being borne on that gutter-tide: a frayed cigar-butt came past first; then a red beercork; and then, its pages flung wide in a disgraceful death, a copy of *Hollywood Gossip* came floating by. It lay flat on its back, a whore-like thing. Tex sniped the cigar and the magazine, crushed tobacco onto a dry page, and rolled a rude cigarette. Smoking, he loked at the magazine's pictures. One page bore a picture of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., in a stove-pipe hat, hugging two girls in one-piece bathing suits. Out of Fairbanks' ears Tex fashioned four long cigarettes, but the figures of the girls in the bathing suits Tex McKay preserved, studying them as he smoked.

The cigarettes were strong, hence good; he offered Mack one, but the boy shook his head as though he were too tired even to smoke. To make a few more, Tex ripped one of the bathing girls up the middle. He had an odd feeling when he did that, and looked through the book for more bathing girls' pictures; but there was no other dry page, and he began to feel tired again.

As he sat Tex recalled that, the last time food had passed his lips, he had been in some place where there was snow on the streets. But he could not remember the name of that place, though his mind sought sleepily and long. Somehow, much seemed to depend upon the remembering: Chicago, Little Rock, Memphis too. His brain stopped on Railroad street in Baton Rouge, and could go no farther. So he dropped the magazine in the gutterflow, wiped his nose on the back of his hand, and

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poked the Negro. Mack followed Tex mechanically. When Tex turned, he turned; when Tex paused, he paused; when Tex hurried forward, he hurried forward beside him. Only once as they went did he speak. 'Bummin' takes 'most ever'thin' outen a feller, don't it?" he asked as they turned a corner.

Tex McKay nodded, "Sho' do. Knocks all the tallow outen' yore pole." And to himself: "Ah better shake this shine, we might get picked up."

When they reached a second Keep-Our-City-Clean box Mack wanted to remove his shoe again; but his fingers slipped around his ankle like a little child's fingers. So McKay took it off for him, kneeling as the other sat; he pulled a wad of paper out of the box and wadded it into the shoe's torn places. Beside him a barefooted Mexican boy holding a small girl by the hand stood and watched with a cynic's air. A woman with furred shoulders went by on high heels, her head in the air and her nose sniffing elegenatly at the sun; as though about to snort green phlegm skyward. As Tex struggled to get the shoe back on Mack's foot, someone behind him spat in the gutter across his shoulder; he saw the gob, like a speckled bug, being borne away on the stream. People were gathering behind him; it was time to be getting on.

They had not gone half a block when Mack stopped and complained, half-accusingly, like some petulant little pickaninny: "It hurts. You just made it worse you did. Now it hurts worst." But they could not stop here, there was no place here to stop; and Mack continued to complain with a rising irascibility.

"If oney I had a sock. A *white* sock mind you. Hev *you* got that kind?"

That was the last thing he said to show he knew that Tex was still with him; after that he seemed slowly to lose awareness, he became like a man mildly drunk or doped. Tex had not known what havoc the simple fact of over-tiredness could wreak. Only a few hours before he had picked up with a husky young buck; now there plodded beside him a half-helpless black boy who depended on him to put on his shoes. Tex began to feel a mild responsibility.

Mack stopped dead still and planted himself directly in front of a bespectacled white youth with books in both hands. He looked to be frightened at Mack's glance. When Tex looked at Mack it was not hard to tell why: Mack's eyes now were

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fever-bright, and burning hollowly. Tex took his arm, but he would not budge one inch.

"*You.* Gimme that sock."

He took the boy by the lapel, and the boy dropped a book.

"Saaaaay—I'll call a cop on you I will." The boy's voice quavered shrilly as a frightened school-girl's; his eyes besought pleadingly those of the crowd.

This time two silver badges; two rows of brass buttons—two pairs of pointed black boots shining in the sun.

"Here, niggers—at it again? All right, Smitty, take 'em both along."

Tex McKay cocked his head, unable, for one moment, to believe what he had heard. Slowly then, he understood: A white man who walked with a 'nigger' was a 'nigger' too. He recognized the park bull as the other took his arm, and he said, "Ah'm no nigger."

Tex was too weary to feel keen fear; and going to jail was all a part of this life anyhow. No one escaped it for very long, and he'd been lucky for a long time now. What he didn't like, what got him by the short hairs, was that crack about a nigger.

He saw the big park bull start reaching for Mack when Mack was still five feet away and Specs stood in between. Specs ducked wildly when the cop's paw came over his shoulder; the paw seized Mack's shirt and pulled him free of the sidewalk with a yank which ripped the sleazy cloth down to the navel. Mack came straight forward, so that his head would have rammed the cop's Sam Browne belt had not the cop stiffarmed him with his open palm.

Tex glanced at the cop who was holding his wrist.

"Ah aint no nigger, mister," he said; but the bull didn't seem to hear.

It was shameful to see the Negro so, his shirt in tatters so that his navel showed thru.

A man in the crowd barked brief hard laughter; a girl fled titillating—"Oooooo—What I *saw!*"

"Ah aint no nigger, mister," Tex repeated; but the bull didn't look like he'd heard.

Mack's voice was a low moan. "You got no right!" he said, and his arms flailed stiffly against the brass buttons. The edge of his sleeve caught in the cop's star; the cop jerked away, and the star was left hanging lop-sidedly.

"You got no right!" Mack's fingers clawed weakly upward

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again; the club-on-a-cord whizzed in a gleaming circle a foot above his head, Mack reached toward it, and the club came down. It cracked down slantwise across the temple with the hissing sound of a large stone thrown through a thin paper wall—a brief sound, sharp and ripping and cold. Mack stood still for one long moment. He had stopped screaming rather suddenly. A dark star appeared on his temple, and his head began sagging slowly; like a wounded fighting-cock's head. Hands caught him under the arm-pits as he fell. While hands held him tentatively, offering him out to the cop like an unclean dish rag.

"My! Wasn't that *brave!*" a woman called from the crowd.

The big bull turned, for that voice had been mocking; but it was not repeated, so he turned toward his patrol.

"Oh, officer!"

A boy's voice this time.

The cop's eyes were shifting uneasily, for the eyes of the crowd were unfriendly. The cop remembered how, once when he was ten, he had been beaten by a smaller boy while other boys stood in a circle and watched: he remembered, seeing encircling eyes. So without fixing his gaze on any one face, he asked, "Well, who wants to see me?"

No reply, till he turned.

"No one, officer my dear. Who would? You stink most awful vile." The woman's voice.

"Who said 'at to me?" he bluffed loudly, "Who said 'at—huh?" His big face looked ready to burst with its bluff. Then he saw laughter starting, and got inside the patrol just in time. The other officer followed with Tex, in front of a chorus of catcalls that sounded like the mad thousand applauding. But Tex McKay heard only one thing clearly. Just as the door slammed someone shouted in, "Niggerlickers—that's what cops is. That's all they do in this town. Big tough niggerlickers, an' that's all they *do* do."

Mack's eyes opened, he revived slowly. On either side of him sat a bull. Tex wondered whether Mack understood all that had happened. His own hands were free, but Mack's were handcuffed. Tex, watching him revive, was torn between regret for having walked with him, and pity for seeing him in pain. The Negro looked sickly grey.

From where he sat guarding the door, the bigger bull glanced over to Tex and spoke warningly. He was still out of

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breath, and a bit bewildered at something, it seemed.

"This'll go mighty hard with you two. Mighty hard, I can say that now. Almost a riot call it was, an' a riot call al'ays goes harder"—he gasped for breath—"Oh lots o' trouble you boys made"—gasping—"trouble in the park first—"

His rump-like face was streaked with sweat. As though to reassure himself of the penalty they were certain to have incurred, he questioned the other officer.

"A riot-call al'ays makes it twice as bad, don't it, Arthur—huh?

Arthur nodded. He was thin, and freckled, and looked unhappy.

"See what Arthur says!—ya almost instergated a riot, that's jest what I'm sayin'. Ya'll get ninety days fer this"—gasping—or elts I'm not yer witness."

In spite of exhaustion, Tex McKay went sick with fear.

"He jest wanted a sock on account his foot is so sore," he protested, "Honest, mister, that foot looks ready to drop off'n his laig."

The silver badge looked at Tex McKay with a huge and expressionless, a moon-like wonder. The big thick brain behind the eyes began to move slowly, painfully, like a heavy door opening onto a room long-closed. Then his face looked somehow cunning-cruel, as understanding at last came into it. And he guffawed. Thwacking his thigh resoundingly, he yawped his face so near to Tex's that Tex smelled the foulness of his breath like a breath from a privy.

"He jest wanted a sock! He jest wanted a sock! Hey, Arthur, did y' get that, Arthur? He jest wanted a sock—an' aint that jest what I given him?"—He went off into whole gales of laughter, his body shaking to its very fingertips. "Say—Art—D'ya get it?—He jest wanted a sock—an' that's what I given him." Arthur smiled a bit wanly, a bit indulgently, and said nothing at all.

"Ho! Ho! He wanted a sock—a *clean* sock! Ho! Ho!"

Outside, the late afternoon sun was waking trembling checkered patterns on low stone buildings rushing past.

They were going to jail; they were going to eat; they are going to have a place to lie down.

Tex said, "Ah aint no nigger."

Mack looked up. "You'se ridin'—aint yo'?"

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THE PORT OF NEW YORK

This was the Promised Land, and still it is
To the persuasive suburban land agent
In bootleg roadhouses where the gin fizz
Bubbles in time to Hollywood's new love-nest pageant.
—HART CRANE

Magnificent to tourists and to tradesmen come,
Loaded with luggage, from voyage oversea,
Between shrill swoopings and the cabled air
White buildings lift a cue for praise.
Far out, upon the ocean's level rink
Where gulls are skaters, freighters and steamers,
Cunard liners, queens of the voyage,
Down on the world's curve curl one smudge of smoke
Farewell—and sink.
And now the port
Swells up to meet you. In the huge sunset,
Crowded with chimneys, terraces, grain elevators,
Ignite a million windows to the widened gaze,
A world afire—the city burning
In a towering architectural blaze.
O stranger welcome,
Feted with fire, but longing for the land,
Turn by the rail and see, where tall she stands,
Iron and green, and crowned with liberty,
Erect upon the bay, the rigid greeting of her hand!

Descend now gangplanks to the dock. Taxi
And hotel suite awaits you, who command
Bellhops and brilliance. Actress of screen,
Chief of staff, Minister or Financier,
You come upon us in a bitter year
Of bank failures and breadlines in the public squares.
Down South Street in one-arm joints
Sawdusted, crawling with flies—or in the Doghouse
Reading the shipping news—bronzed sailors,
Tattooed with blue anchors, naked women
In a Shanghai hophouse or maybe Samarkand,

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Wait for a berth—who know all knots, riggings,
The wheel's kick and the gloryhole—ordering coffee and.
But still up Whitehall drape shipowners' flags
And hunger has not changed Trinity's known site.
Locked in their vaults, the gilt-edged shares repose all night,
And pigeons alone assault the Treasury's bronze doors.
Through bankrupts, panics, crashes, the Exchange,
Though shaken on its pillars, knows no change.

Safe in your room, unpack and watch the evening fall.
The lamps come suddenly to life, as though
Touched by a secret hand to tungsten glow.
After your supper, served in the hotel grill,
The night awaits you; sightseer's bus will take you round the town.
The barker will explain each famous sight.
The Mission of the Holy Name, the Bowery and Chinatown,
Hung with gold lanterns, tong wars—and further down
Through twisted streets to little Italy
And garlic smells—perhaps in Cherry Street you'll see
The celebration of the feat of Maria Negre, the black Mary,
Worshipped with white candles and pushcarts on the curb.
Peer through the smoky window, remember all the names you've heard;
Back home you'll quiver the persimmoned souls
Of village aunts with murder dives, gin mills and opium holes.
Up through Delancey smile at the derby hats and rabbi beards.
But through the motor's purr is still unheard
The sweatshop's hiss of steam. . . the Hoffman's pressing roar. . .
When drunken laborers come lurching through the swinging barroom door
Down on Third Avenue, under the El's shadow, think
What terrors the barker has not spieled has driven them to drink.
Then rumbling through Fourteenth you hit the Square.
And now Broadway again . . . this is the terminal, the end,
Lights! lights!—Times Square.

Through midnight throngs, under the dancing signs,
Among the tinhorn sports, the small time gamblers,
The hoofers out of work, the stenos taking in a show,
The restaurants with flapjaks and the Roseland Ramblers
Playing the latest dance hit—with thousands go.

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Past stage entrances and billiard parlors
Where bookies pass out business cigarettes, the thousand faces
Shift, vanish in a neon fog, glimpsed once and gone
Rise up anew upon the tide, new eyes the flood replaces.
And glimpsed among the lights' hallucination
Pleasure laughs out of a trombone's mouth
Lifted in the Circle north or in the thunderous Square.
Hands grope to clasp her, but she eludes them there,
Though always they return to seek her vanishing face that soars
High above the Paramount clock or laughs from haberdashery
stores.

Slow metropolitan bells empty the late theatres,
The richest to their homes upon the Drive.
But midnight sends the clerks and stenos home
By the last trains and nodding in their seats
In interborough slumbers, to dark and obscure streets
Where locals lurch and stop at silent stations.
Along deserted pavements where the thin moon leaks
Into quiet garbage cans, the feet awaken echoes.
Slip into the lock the hushed key quietly . . .
Slow snores gargle from hot rooms . . . here the bedroom
And the same bed . . . neatly fold the clothes on chair . . .
Pick out the office dress you'll wear . . .
Wind the stopped clock . . . the head sinks down in weariness,
Remembering the alarm, the muffled chorus of a song,
A face seen . . .then dark and sleep swallows the pursuit of
happiness.

Tourist, turn in—or will you go
When watchmen on their rounds
Flash searchlights into shuttered department stores?
The lean cat bounding from the fence slinks
To the pool of rainwater, eyes warily about, and drinks.
The crosstown streets run both ways to the rivers
And trolleys empty trundle to silent barns.
The ferry hoots and sails the Jersey side.
The pilot trains the splayed beam on the tide.
You go now, leaning on the rail, to ride
The quietest of waters, downstream,
Past slaughter house and ironworks, the cattle yards,
Past viaduct and park and amusement place,

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Until the river bending to the bay, lifts
To the sight the electric hand and the illuminated face.

Now from the brooding ragged men who nurse
Their sores in the grass on the small public lawns
Or seek the river's wharfed and warehoused side,
Yesterday's papers about their feet—what dreams
Awaken seeing across the slow and darkened tide
The apparition where her tall face gleams?
Once was she haven, harbor and desire,
Europe's better. Who knew the double eagle and the crested
claw,
North England's hunger, or the pogrom's fire,
Ireland's landlords, or the great floods, sought her shore.
Cunningly she lured them, cunningly—
Who came in the ship's depths and in the land's depths died—
Some mine exploding explained their liberty,
These warehouses shelter all that's left of pride.

But brightly to the stranger lifts her hand,
And ragged though it is, her myth survives.
White buildings still amaze the visitors who land,
And lies conceal what hungers wreck our lives.
Who sought her as the sickened seek the sun,
No longer on her towering falsehood blind our sight.
Now in the iron shadow of the piers—swept
By the North Atlantic—though tall she stand—
Brightly as ever—with myth and hand—her myth is done.

ALFRED HAYES

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LITERATURE IN TWO WORLDS

Andre Malraux

IT IS INDISPENSABLE, first of all, to render clear a couple of ideas which will provide an undertone to all that I am about to say, just as they have done for all that has been said here up to now.

The first has to do with the relations between Marxism and Soviet literature. The conception of a literature as the application of a doctrine never represents a correspondence with reality. The Gospels produced Christianity, which in its turn produced Christian literature. The Greek doctrines shaped the Hellenic city, which gave birth to Greek literature. Marxism has built the Soviet society, which finds expression in the literature of the USSR. Between a literature and a doctrine, there is always a civilization of living men.

The second problem has to do with the freedom of the artist. To assume that the bourgeois writer's freedom is represented by the possibility which is always his of giving expression to the bourgeois class, is socially accurate enough, but much less accurate artistically. It is my opinion that the bourgeois class has never expressed itself directly. It makes no attempt to justify itself as a bourgeoisie, but always as an aristocracy, whether in the matter of culture, of nationalism, or of religion. Whereas Christian civilization essays a justification for what it is, the bourgeoisie, ever since its great period in the Eighteenth century, always seeks one by a round-about way.

It is neither Claudel nor Proust who *stand for* the bourgeoisie; it is Henry Bordeaux.

The artist as an artist knows so little freedom in the choice of subject-matter that it is impossible for us to picture, at the present time, the best among the bourgeois writers making up his mind to dedicate a book to President Doumergue and, at the same time, being able to produce a worthwhile work. That is because *it is only from the positive elements of a civilization that a work of art derives its strength;* and this is the point to which I would draw your attention. The freedom that means something for the artist is not the liberty to do just anything; it is the liberty to do what he wants to do; and the Soviet artist is well aware that it is not from a lack of harmony with the civilization about him, but on the con-

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trary, from a profound accord with that civilization, that he as an artist draws the strength of his genius.

We have formed the habit of living and thinking within a civilization to which the intellect by its very nature is opposed. I have no desire here to go into any complicated ideologies; I should, rather, like to make clear a very simple fact, and that is this: whatever may be their strength or their weakness, the contemporary institutions of Western Europe are inseparable from a certain hypocrisy. Many of my listeners have lived through the War; and their sense of irritation at that time was due, not to a theory, but to the consciousness of a cleavage between the bloody and tragic reality that surrounded them—even though they may have found in it certain elements of grandeur—and the manner in which that reality was expressed, in newspapers and in books. In this respect, the world has not changed greatly since the War.

But let us not compare the best of Soviet art to the worst that the bourgeoisie has to show. Rather, let us look at the highest manifestations of bourgeois art and try to see just where it is the essential difference lies. For more than sixty years, the great works of Western art have followed a consistent line of development. It is no longer a question, as Balzac put it, of depicting a world, but of giving a pictorial representation of the evolution of a personal problem. *The Possessed* is not a depiction, not even an unfriendly one, of a Russian revolutionary scene; it is the development of Dostoievski's ethical thinking through a succession of living characters. Like Nietzsche in his *Zarathustra,* Dostoievski is a thinker who expresses himself parabolically.

We find the same problem in painting. If Cezanne diminishes more and more the importance of the subject, it is not due to a flair for "good painting" in the Dutch sense, nor to a love for the still-life itself; it is because he is thus free to express himself; and this disappearance of the subject, which leads to abstract painting, does not indicate, as has been asserted, an ever-increasing respect for the graphic element, but, the truth is, an ever-growing respect for the painter himself. The modern abstract painter sets about creating his own myth, just as Dostoievski did; and just as Goethe observed that every writer writes his complete works, so it may be said that, practically speaking, Picasso has never ceased painting his complete works.

* * *

The artist's essential task being, thus, the creation of his own myth, it remains to explain how it is this myth is propagated and the work of art comes to take on viability. I shall select two examples, Baudelaire and Fromentin. In each of these two cases, what we have is an artist endowed with a very special sensitivity, in which a certain number of

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readers find their own sensitivity expressed upon a higher plane, and thereby justified. My thought obviously calls for a degree of shading; but I think that, speaking in the large, it may be stated that the reader pays the artist in admiration for what the latter gives him in the way of justification. I do not believe in any mysterious Platonic beauty, to which a few privileged artists down the ages are able to attain, but rather, in a relation which is set up between the sensitivities of individuals and the need which is theirs of finding justification through expression.

This problem is at the core of all Occidental thinking on the subject of art, and it may be said that the art of a bourgeois civilization practically revolves about the point.

* * *

What we must understand is, that the artist and modern society are by their very nature opposed to each other. In a country such as France, apart from all divisions into classes or collectivities of one sort or another a further line of demarcation is erected between those who yield their allegiance to the civilization about them and those who refuse such an allegiance. And school-teachers, professors, women, laborers, and bourbeois, in varying numbers, are likely now to find themselves caught up into that new collectivity known as the Intelligentsia, and so discover that they have a number of points of agreement on questions of art. (Let me not be misunderstood here; I look upon this collectivity, constituted as it is, as a merely temporary one, one that would assuredly be disrupted by any deep-going crisis; I am simply, here, taking the literary fact of the moment).

In our civilization, there is a fundamental lack of harmony between the intellect on the one hand and social institutions on the other. The element of hypocrisy, which I mentioned a while back, plays a preponderant part where intellectual matters are concerned. If we wish to picture for ourselves the attitude of the Russian worker toward his civilization, the best thing that we could do would be to compare it with the state of mind of the masses in Western Europe at the moment of mobilization, while they still accepted the War. We can go on to imagine what an art of the War era might have been, if the War had kept its human meaning for the entire country, such a meaning as it held for the Nation during the mobilizations of the First Republic. Soviet art is an art of this kind. It has been said, and I will repeat it, that Soviet civilization is a totalitarian one; by which I understand, a civilization in which men have a part, to which they accord their conscious allegiance, and in which labor is not the deadening part of life. The same thing has been said of Fascism. I do not believe that is true. For Fascism, to the degree in which it grants to capital a preponderant rôle, must meet again, in the ethical domain, with all the contradictions inherent in the bourgeoisie. If they tell us

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that the German Fascist literature is too young for us to be able to pass judgment upon it as yet (although certain of the best Soviet works date from the period of wartime Communism), we have but to reflect on the long years under Fascism in Italy, whose literature causes us to doubt very much the existence of a totalitarian civilization in the peninsula.

But there is, after all, a totalitarian art among us; there is one artist who, if he were present in this auditorium, might say, as any Soviet artist at Moscow: "You all know me, and you all admire me, each in his fashion." For that artist is Charley Chaplin. Men of the Occident, as they stand before a work of art, no longer feel a sense of unity save in the domain of the comic, and the only real communion that we know is in laughing at ourselves.

* * *

Within the Soviet civilization, the fact of first and capital importance is the diminution of the artist as an object of interest in his own eyes. The world to him is more interesting than himself, for the reason that a world is there to discover. Let us make careful note of the fact that the bourgeois world, already sufficiently advanced in age, is a world that is relatively known, and that the discoveries of a Zola by comparison with the world of a Balzac, are very slight; since for a Western artist, to look at the world of society means to recopy it or to transform it through his own vision. It may be stated that the bourgeois world's inventory is over. On the other hand, stock-taking in the Soviet world is yet to be done.

To beging with, take the matter of facts. The passion for secretiveness having disappeared, the writer finds himself confronted in all fields with a limitless documentation, faced with a world in process of perpetual discovery, as a psychologist would be with us, whose researches had suddenly opened to him a vast and unexplored realm of facts; for by his position with reference to the universe, the Soviet artist bears a good deal more resemblance to a Freud in the early stages than he does to a French writer of today.

One result of this is the quest of *types,* which is a very important one in Russian literature; seeing that it is through types that the reader becomes conscious of the new world. As I see it, the appearance of a new class or collective group in the life of a country at once connotes the possibility or the necessity of a great artist's expressing himself through types; *for nearly everything that I have just said of the Soviet artist might have been said of Balzac,* who socially had the same situation to confront.

A second point: the inventory of mankind.

Much has been said and written of Soviet man, and numerous attempts have been made to delimit his psychology. Theories here, it seems to me,

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are of little avail; there are other ways that would be more fruitful in results. For some time past, hundreds of cases have been brought to light and passed upon in connection with the *tchistkas* (Party house-cleanings), affording us a glimpse of Soviet man in action, one who is by no means a codified being as yet. In place of seeking to formulate a theory of the new man, it would be infinitely more to the purpose to bring together and survey this vast and often deeply affecting body of documentation, by way of seeing what conclusions are to be drawn from it.

Stress has frequently been laid upon the lack of confidence in man which Russian society in process of construction, and often gravely menaced, has been obliged to show. But let us not confuse our terms here. This lack of confidence has to do only with the individual; man, on the contrary, has perhaps never known so great a confidence as that reposed in him by the Soviets. It is by showing confidence in boys that they have built up the Pioneers; taking woman such as she was under Tzarism, that is to say, one whose condition was the lowest and most grievous of any, they have made of her the Soviet Woman, one who today stands for the highest development of feminine will and consciousness. With thieves and assassins, they built the White Sea canal. From abandoned children, nearly all of them likewise thieves, they have built up the communes of reëducation. At a certain festival, I saw coming into Red Square a delegation of these former waifs, and I heard the throng acclaim these wisps of humanity which it had been instrumental in saving, with an enthusiasm that was shown toward no other group.

And finally, we come to the hero. Thanks to the suppression of that importance which was formerly conferred upon money, the USSR is able to uncover the positive hero, the only true one always, the one who risks his life for other men. The absence of money as an intervening factor restores to the heroic deed all its primitive significance, such a significance as it might possess in war, if the cannon-merchant did not exist, and if no one drew any profit from war—a Promethean significance.

* * *

The basic feature of Soviet art is, accordingly, as I see it, the rediscovery of objectivity. But what is to become, some one may ask, of the personality of the artist? I do not believe that it is diminished, but I do feel that its means are different. In place of proceeding by affirmation, it functions through selection. The present method in Russian art is socialist realism, a method which I regard as a valuable and as potent one. But a point I would insist upon is, if the will to realism is an effective one for the USSR, it is for the reason that it is brought to bear upon a romantic reality. Civil war, wartime Communism, the Five Year Plan, socialist construction, frontier-guards, autonomus

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republics,—all this serves to create a tragic or a picturesque reality, which confers upon realism all that is necessary to enable it to outstrip itself.

* * *

I feel, in conclusion, that the basic consequence of the Soviet society is the possibility of creating a new humanism; I feel that humanism well may be man's fundamental attitude toward a civilization which he accepts, just as individualism is his fundamental attitude toward a civilization which he refuses; that the important thing from now on is not that which distinguishes one man from another, but the depth of his humanity and his readiness to fight, not for that which separates him from his fellows, but for that which will enable him to come to them on a terrain that lies beyond their individualities.

It is high time to show that the union of mankind is something other than a first-communion souvenir. I feel that, just as Nietzsche took what was then known as the brute attitude and elevated it into a Zarathustra, so we should set up once again, in a realm beyond all ridiculous sentimentality, those values that bring men together and restore a meaning to the idea of manly brotherhood.

From the French by Samuel Putnam

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BENEFITS OF AMERICAN LIFE

James T. Farrell

TAKISS FILLIOS was a strong shepherd boy from the mountains of Greece. His hard-working mother saved up enough money to pay his steerage fare to America where the streets were paved with gold, where there were buildings as big as mountains, where all the women dressed like princesses, and all the men had their pockets lined with money, where every boy had a bicycle, and every man and woman owned an automobile and all the houses were like palaces. At the age of thirteen, Takiss, large for his age, arrived in a paradise known as Chicago.

He was met at the train, a scared and bewildered boy, by a relative who took him to a home on South Halsted street. Takiss was immediately employed by that relative in a candy store. Quickly, he discovered what it meant to live in paradise. It meant working from six in the morning until six in the evening, and until later on weekends. It meant sweeping out the store, washing dishes and windows, polishing, arranging, mopping, running errands. It meant attending night school to learn English when he could scarcely keep his eyes open, and where he was frequently laughed at for his blundering efforts. It meant walking along, living in the midst of dirty streets where coal dust, soot, smoke, and the poisonous fumes of automobiles choked his nostrils, and made him cough. It meant loneliness, with the pain of memories of his homeland of Grecian mountains, memories of his mother, and of the long slow days with the sheep.

For a long period, Takiss was a very lonely boy, remembering that homeland of his, and the games he had played with the other boys, remembering the smile and kiss of his old mother, remembering always. And he was afraid of America, and of that tremendous paradise known as Chicago. He worked doggedly day after day, earning five dollars a week, and from that, saving a small pittance which he deposited in an immigrants'

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bank. But he looked ahead to the day when he would become like Americans, talk like them, wear their clothes, ride in automobiles just as they did, go out with pretty American girls.

In time, Takiss learned things. He learned American words, but never how to speak them like an American. He learned that he was a dirty Greek greenhorn, and that many Americans would have been just as pleased if he and many of his countrymen had never come to their country. And he learned that American girls laugh sardonically at a young Greek greenhorn. Also, he learned of places where for two dollars he could go and find American girls who did not laugh at Greek greenhorns, at least for a period of five or ten minutes. And he learned how to buy cheap American clothes on time, to wear a purple silk shirt, purple socks, and an orange tie. And in time, he learned also that in the store, he could put some of the money he took in into his pocket instead of the cash register.

Eventually the relative employing him discharged him in anger, branding him as a crook, a robber, and a traitor. In the heated quarrel, Takiss asked him why, if he wanted honesty, he paid him only six dollars a week wages, when he made so much money himself, selling such bad products.

Takiss was employed by other of his countrymen, in fruit stores, soda parlors, at hot dog stands, and in restaurants. He acquired additional American knowledge, and more American words. And sometimes when he was dressed up, wearing his purple silk shirts, with socks to match, and an orange tie, he walked in the parks or along Halsted street, seeing American girls, wishing that he had one of his own, a blond girl with a beautiful pink-white complexion. And sometimes, he longed for his Grecian mountains, he dreamed of going back there, taking with him, American money, and perhaps one of these pretty young American girls with a pink-white complexion.

Time slid from under Takiss, and he was a young man in his twenties, with his first citizenship papers. He had worked like a dog, and he was still working at the same jobs, doing the same tasks and chores he had always done since he had come to America. He earned fifteen dollars a week, and worked twelve hours a day in a candy store. He cleaned, and he mopped; he scrubbed, he polished; he washed; he waited on trade. And often when he was alone in the store, he pocketed money from the cash register. Every week, he deposited money in the bank, and almost nightly, he looked at his bank book, proud of his

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savings. But he was never able to get much money saved, because he was always quitting his job or being discharged, and forced to live on his savings until he secured a new one.

And he learned another thing—how to dance like Americans danced. A Greek-American young friend of his took him to a dancing school, called a taxi-dance, on West Madison street. He paid a dollar, and was given ten tickets, each one good for a dance which lasts from one minute to a minute and a half. Any girl in the place would dance with him, because she received five cents for each dance. His tickets were quickly exhausted, and he bought more. It did not matter if he could dance or not, and the girls were glad to teach him. He went to this taxi-dance regularly, spending three, four, and five dollars every visit, and once in a while, a girl would ask him if he wanted to take her home, and for a few more dollars, he could get other things too. After he commenced attending regularly to this taxi dance hall, he was able to save less money.

Takiss then spent some of his savings for a suit with bell bottom trousers. He cultivated a moustache and long side burns, greased his hair and parted it in the middle with meticulous attention. He began to look like a sheik, and listened to pick up all the words which the American sheiks used. He went to public dance halls where there was only an admission fee and longer dances. At these places, there were always swarms of girls, pretty American girls, some of them tall and beautiful blondes with milky skins, and red lips like cherries. He would ask them to dance. Often they would dance with him, once. He would talk, and they would notice his accent and when he asked them for a second dance, they would thank him with great regret, and exclaim that all their other dances were taken. So he would quickly be driven to dancing with the homely and ugly girls who were called wall flowers. And then, he would go back to the taxi dances where all the girls would dance with him for ten cents a dance.

One day, Takiss was twenty-five. His native Greek mountains seemed to have receded in time, and he saw them only in painful mists of memory, recalling their details with lessening concreteness. He had been in America for twelve years, and he was working ten hours a day in a hot dog stand for ten dollars a week, and able to graft from three to five dollars a week extra. He wanted to make money, and when he was a rich man with a hot dog stand or restaurant of his own, return to Greece with

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an American wife, and act lake a millionaire. And he had thirty five dollars in the bank as a start toward these riches.

And hard times came to America. Takiss was out of work in the winter, and again his savings melted. He was employed for ten dollars a week in a candy store, working twelve hours, and in four months, that job was gone. He worked for seven dollars a week washing dishes in a large restaurant, and then, his pay was cut to five dollars, and he went home every night, tired, with chafed hands, and an aching back. He had less money, also, to go to taxi dances. And he lost that job.

He walked the streets looking for other work, and always he learned the same story—hard times. . . . He ate very frugally, lived in a chilly room that was gnawed by rats, and wished that he was back home again in his native Greek mountains. Every day, he went out looking for a job, and sometimes, he found work for a few days or a few weeks, and was able to skim along while he tried again to find work.

One day he saw an advertisement with large letters at the top—DANCE MARATHON. He investigated, and learned that it was a contest in which everybody tried to dance longer than the others, and the winner received a five hundred dollar prize. And maybe if he won it, he would get a job in the movies and become the idol of American girls, or go on the vaudeville stage, or be given a contract to dance in a cabaret. And while he was in the contest, he would be cared for, fed, and there would be no room rent to pay. He was strong, and husky, and he could dance. He was used to standing on his feet all day in restaurants, candy stores, and at hot dog stands. And this was his chance to become rich. He would no longer have to tramp all over town to be told that there were no jobs because it was hard times. This was much better than saving up to own a candy store, and grow fat like the American Greeks for whom he had worked. And after he won this contest, and became famous, he would go back to Greece with a trunk full of clothes and money, and maybe a rich American wife whose skin was like milk.

Takiss entered the dance marathon, and when the rules were explained to him, he only understood that he was to stay out on the floor and dance, and if he was able to do that longer than anyone else, he would get five hundred dollars. A number was pinned on his back, and he was assigned a partner named Marie Glenn, a beautiful blonde American girl of the type he had always dreamed of as a possible wife. At first, when she

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met him, she shuddered, and her face broke into an expression of disgust. But then, she saw he was strong and husky with broad shoulders, and smiled, offering him a limp hand, and sweetly telling him that she knew they were going to be the winners.

The dance marathon was conducted in a public dance hall on the south side of Chicago. A ring was placed in the center with an orchestra dais at one end. Around it there were box seats, and behind them, rising rows of bleacher benches. The opening was described, in advertisements, as gala. An announcer talked through a microphone, and the promoters and judges in tuxedoes also addressed a full house. The contestants were introduced, and some of them, but not Takiss, spoke to the crowd and the large radio audience all over America. It was all a new and promising if confusing world to Takiss, and he walked around the floor, feeling as lost and as out of place as he had on those first days in America. But it was leading at last to paradise.

The contest swung into action. They danced for three minutes out of every ten, and walked around and around the floor for the remaining time; and they were given fifteen minutes rest out of every hour. There was glamor in being watched by so many people, in eating sandwiches and drinking coffee before them, in receiving attention from doctors and nurses, and meeting all the others who, like himself, saw at the end of this contest, five hundred dollars and fame. As the contestants got to talking to each other, Takiss heard them using one word over and over again—celebrity. A celebrity was somebody who was important, like Jack Dempsey, and the movie stars. They all wanted to be a celebrity. And Takiss too, he determined that he was going to be a celebrity.

Takiss had not imagined that anyone could dance for more than a week like this, and that maybe after a sleepless and tiring week, he would be the winner. In less than twenty four hours, he learned that it was a grind harder than he had calculated, and while he doggedly gritted his teeth, he determined that he would not let himself drop out. Still, he wished that he had not entered it. He wished he were back working in fruit stores and ice cream parlors the way he had before hard times had come. He wished that he were a shepherd back in the Grecian mountains where his old mother had lived until her death.

When his partner was tired, she put her arms around his

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neck or hips, laid her head against him, and fell asleep while he dragged her tiresomely around the floor, and when he fell asleep, she did the same with him. Again and again, their bodies were jolted, shoved, pushed against each other, and he began wanting her so that her very nearness became excruciating. And he noticed that she, particularly in the early dog hours of the mornings when there was scarcely any spectators in the hall, began brushing herself against him at every opportunity, looking feverishly into his eyes, and telling him smutty jokes. And the other dancers became the same way, and the fellows used to tell him how much they wanted one of these girls, any girl.

Day after day, the marathon grind went on. His eyes grew heavy. His back ached. His feet became sore, and raw so that each step was pain, and he felt often as if he were walking on fire. The hall was almost continually stale with cigarette smoke, fouled with body odors. He felt almost continually dirty, sweaty and itchy. Dust got into his nostrils, and his eyes. He developed a cough. His muscles knotted. He became like a person who was always only half awake, and everything took on the semblance of being a semi-dream. Marie, also, changed. She began to swell around the buttocks. Deep circles grew under her eyes. She became haggard, and blowsy and looked like a worn out prostitute. She used more and more cosmetics, and her face became like a ghastly caricature of the pretty girl who had entered the contest.

In the beginning, particularly because of his accent and Greek heritage, Takiss became the butt of many jokes. Over and over again, he would be asked why he wasn't running a restaurant, and he would be given orders for a piece zapple pie kid. He was nicknamed Restaurant, Fruit Store, Socrates, and Zapple Pie Kid. In time this wore down, and failed to anger or disturb him. The grind settled into habitual misery and torture. He, like all the other contestants, would long for fresh air, and during rest periods, when they were not so tired that they would be dragged like walking somnambulists to the rest cots, would enter the vile and filthy dressing room or the equally unsavory lavatory, and jam their heads out the window to breathe fresh air, and to look longfully down at the street where people walked free to do what they wished, not tired, able to breathe fresh air, even the fresh air of a city street that was saturated with carbon monoxide fumes and sootiness.

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Day after day dragged on. Sometimes Takiss, Marie, or the other contestants would exist in stupors for six hours, twelve hours, a day, or even longer. As the time passed, the contestants would switch from affected and over-stimulated good spirits, to raw fighting nervousness, and then into that glazed-eyed stupor. Particularly in those dog hours of the early morning, they would be raw, if awake, and fight and curse. Sex too became a growing obsession, and in time, was almost madness. Living so near to one another, their bodies touching so frequently, they told smuttier and smuttier pokes. Perversities and desires or propositions for perversities sprang up amongst them. It became a relentless process of torture physical and mental. Constipation, diarrahea, sudden inabilities to control their kidneys so that now and then, a contestant would be walking around the floor, and dragged in sleep, with wet lines down their trousers, or the beach pyjamas which the girls usually wore. Broken blood vessels, and swollen veins in the legs. Headaches, eye troubles, sore throats, fevers, colds. Periods of sweatiness, followed by shivers and chills. And always that returning stupor, caused by sleeplessness and fatigue, and by the dreams and fantasies which they entertained as relief from that endless procession around and around the floor. And at the end of it all, money, the chance to become a celebrity, sex, and clean white bed sheets and a soft freshly lined bed.

Ways of making money from day to day quickly sprang up and were used to the utmost, so that all of the contestants had bank accounts. Every one developed some trick or act, a song, a dance, a stunt of some kind, and after putting it on, they would be showered with money from the crowd. One of the contestants, a raw country youth of Lithuanian origins with a nasal twang to his voice, chewed razor blades as his stunt. Takiss learned a dance. Stores, theatres, and politicians also paid them fees to wear signs or sweaters and jerseys with advertising printed on the front or backs. Money was sent to them, mash notes, often written in as ignorant and as bad English as that which Takiss used and wrote in. The various spectators picked favorites, cheered for them, and shouted encouragement.

And still the days stretched out, past the first month, with contestant after contestant dropping out, and the field narrowing down. One day, there would be a birthday party. Another day, there was a floor wedding between two of the contestants who had met on the floor, and the wedding provided endless

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hours of raw jokes and humor about when they would have their first wedding night, until sex-crazed, both of the newlyweds went temporarily out of their heads, and the girls screamed until she was dragged off the floor. Disqualified they were out of the marathon, and new wishful humor sprang up. Another day, a girl had an abscessed tooth extracted on the floor, and immediately afterwards, she rejoined the endless walking procession that tramped around and around the floor in this ever dullening stupor. Another day, an Italian boy, who with his wife had entered the contest because they were both unemployed and had been evicted required crutches, and ran a high fever. With his eyes intent from the fever, with dogged suffering imprinted on his haggard face, he hobbled around and around. And at the end of the twelve hour period, he was forced out of the contest by the judges because of his worsening condition.

Again and again, Takiss wanted to quit, and satisfy himself with the incidental money he had taken in, and as repeatedly, he would doggedly go on. Like the others, he would fall into that lumbrous sleep, and external means would be required to awaken him so that he might continue. The male nurses would slap him in the face with wet towels, put his shoes on the wrong feet, strap him into an electric vibrator machine, poke their fingers into his throat, tickle his calloused soles. During one period his cough developed into a chest cold. For another period, he was not out of his stupor for three days. And Marie, his partner, suffered the same tortures. They went on. Days and nights, and days and nights, with the field narrowing to thirteen, ten, eight, five, and finally two couples. Then, Marie collapsed, and was carried off the floor and shipped to a hospital, and Takiss was disqualified. They each collected the two hundred and fifty dollars second place money.

After recuperation, Takiss entered other dance marathons, and became a professional. He secured a copy of *Yes We Have No Bananas* with a Greek translation of the words, and this, with his dance stunt, became very popular. He was able with both stunts, and with a growing audience of fans, to earn from ten to fifteen dollars a day in extra money. Even when he was forced to retire from marathons or was disqualified, he departed with added money. Again the desire to return to his homeland, like a rich American, grew upon him, and now his bank account increased. He was something of a celebrity in this new world of his. He was entertained by prominent Greeks, and his pic-

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ture was even placed over a feature article in the Greek press. He had a run of a week at a small theatre on South Halsted street where there were many Greeks.

In all Takiss participated in sixteen dance marathons. In eight of them, he collected prize money, and was the winner of a thousand dollar super-marathon, in which, only finalists from other marathons were permitted to enter, and in which, there were no rest periods. He had money now, five thousand dollars. He could and did return to Greece. But the strain of the marathons had ruined his lungs and he had tubercolosis. Tubercular resorts had been developed in his native Grecian mountains, and when he returned, it was necessary for him to become a patient in one of them, and the money he had earned was paid out while he lived there with his lungs rotting away on him.

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TWO POEMS

AMERICAN RHAPSODY

Before warmth and sight and sound are gone,
and sometimes the evening lights spring up, as always, but not for you and not for me,
before the sky is lost, before the clouds are lost, before their slow, still shadows are lost from the hills,

Shall we meet at 8 o'clock and kiss and exclaim and arrange another meeting as though there were love,
pretend, even alone, we believe the things we say,
laugh along the boulevard as though there could be laughter,
make our plans and nourish hope, pretending, what is the truth, that we ourselves are fooled?

You can be a princess and I'll be the beggar; no, you can be the beggar and I'll be king;
you be the mother and go out and beg for food; I'll be a merchant, the man you approach, a devoted husband, famous as a host; the merchant can be a jobless clerk who sleeps on subway platforms then lies dead in Potter's field; the clerk can be a priest, human, kindly, one who enjoys a joke; the priest can be a lady in jail for prostitution and the lady can be a banker who has his troubles, too;
let the merchant be grieved, let the priest be stirred, let the banker be moved, let the red squad copper be a patron of the arts;
you be a rat; I'll be the trap; or we both can be maggots in the long black box;
murder can be comic and hunger can be kind.

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LULLABY

Wide as this night, old as this night is old and young as it is
young, still as this, strange as this,
filled as this night is filled with the light of a moon as grey,
dark as these trees, heavy as this scented air from the fields,
warm as this hand,
as warm, as strong,

Is the night that wraps all the huts of the south and folds the
empty barns of the west;
is the wind that fans the roadside fire;
are the trees that line the country estates, tall as the lynch
trees, as straight, as black;
is the moon that lights the mining towns, dim as the light
upon tenement roofs, grey upon the hands at the bars
of Moabit, cold as the bars of the Tombs.

—KENNETH FEARING

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FORM AND CONTENT

Wallace Phelps

ONE OF THE MANY PROBLEMS which centuries of criticism have failed to solve is the relation of form to content. The principal reason, I suspect, is that the question has not been accurately stated. A blurred question evokes irrelevant answers. A long line of idealist estheticians took the problem as a pinpoint for speculation, somehow never conceiving it as a real basis for specific criticism. More recently the British school of critics has evaded the fundamental issues in probing the place of a writer's beliefs in our estimate of his achievement. The closest approach to a solution has appeared in incidental statements by Marxian critics whose concern for usable elements in our literary heritage has brought them to the heart of the question.

For a long time the relation of form to content was considered to be a special case of the general relation of matter to spirit, substance to essence, the temporal to the eternal, etc. These are immediately recognized as variations on a prominent *motif* of idealist philosophy. From this approach form was always emphasized as the essential, enduring, spiritual element of art. Plato and Plotinus in seeking a definition of *beauty,* squeezed out the substance and meaning of specific art works, and found beauty in the essence, the divine idea. (Aristotle, as a naturalist, examined the material of art, but was left with an inconclusive emphasis on the universal and on the formal aspects of poetry and drama). Kant and his followers argued that beauty in art arises from its design which is given to pure intuition. Hegel inverted the formula by conceiving of matter as the form in which the Universal Idea is shaped, and he envisaged a primitive dialectical relation between the two, but his hypostasizing of substance puts the weight on form which is energized by spirit. And Croce, after acknowledging the existence of content says "the esthetic fact, therefore, is form, and nothing but form." I have referred to but a few outstanding figures, but the history of esthetics is for the most part an elaboration of this theme. This is not very surprising when we consider that the fundamental premise of idealist philosophy is a detachment from the material conditions of life, and a severance of the necessary social derivations of ideas and forms.

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Of recent philosophers John Dewey does greatest justice to the substantial side of art. Dewey points out that content derives from experience, that form is the shape which this experience is given, and that the two are interdependent elements of a unity. Dewey is just short of a definitive social and creative analysis, because the question remains for him largely on the plane of categorical relations.

The form-content question is almost entirely absent from literary criticism up to the twentieth century. With very few exceptions, literary critics did not concern themselves with conceptual problems. Esthetics and criticism were two separate streams of activity. Moreover, the periodic transitions to new subjects and new forms represented, for the most part, an unconscious process. Bourgeois drama, for example, introduced merchant types and a merchant morality, without an exhausting overhauling and consistent revaluation of renaissance drama. With the preoccupation of writers toward the close of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, however, with technical innovations, and the corresponding indifference to subject, the form-content problem assumed considerable significance.

Today, the conscious transition to explicitly revolutionary literature which many writers are making swings the axis of critcism to the relation of form to content. A systematic approach to the usable elements in our literary heritage is impossible without an effective analysis of the connection between traditional beliefs and the way they have been shaped into important works of art. The fulcrum for this analysis lies in the unified outlook and sensibility which the Marxian philosophy provides. Unless the method of analysing a problem in criticism stems from a valid program of literature, the discussion tends to dissolve in irrelevant speculation. It is interesting to note that I. A. Richards, in considering one aspect of this problem, argues that a "suspension of disbelief" is a necessary condition for appreciating a work of art, and T. S. Eliot says that the magnitude rather than the acceptability of a writer's belief is relevant to a judgment of his stature. This indecisive, evasive approach to content is apparently an outgrowth of the fact that the milieu of these critics really contains no groundwork of affirmative belief.

The usual way in which the form and content question is posed is to ask whether *content* and *form* are separable or inseparable. But the terms are not defined, nor is the meaning of separation explained. So far as "separation" is concerned, whatever meaning we give to form and content, distinguishing between the two is any specific poem is not the same as taking over the form, let us say, of a poem and discarding the content in writing a new poem.

Form is commonly thought of as the shape or structure of a literary

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work or as the linguistic method employed. It is taken as the mould into which a writer's ideas are poured. When people speak of the sonnet, the novel, reportage as literary forms, they are really referring to the traditional *patterns* of writing. The use of these *patterns* for varied esthetic and political purposes indicates that no literary traditions or social class has any particular rights to these patterns and that in using any of them, revolutionary writers do not take anything specifically esthetic from their literary heritage. A more frequent meaning is *form* as *technique* or *method.* But method or technique alone are merely the verbal *surface* of the impact which a poem or novel has upon the reader, because linguistic methods are intimately associated with the writer's purposes and perceptions. Joyce's methods, for example, are a function of his sensory and intellectual experience.

Content, on the other hand, is usually pictured as something solid, organized and completely philosophical. It is considered as the *what a writer is saying,* and form as the *how a writer says it.* But in examining typical literary works, we usually cannot point to any such *logical* content. No critic has yet systematized Shakespeare's *beliefs* into a coherent set of ideas. Only in predominantly philosophical writers are the ideas recognized as such; but even in the work of Thomas Mann (who is commonly considered a philosophical writer) it is impossible to isolate a *content,* since his view of the world is so completely merged with the narrative structure. In *The Magic Mountain,* the attitudes and values emerge from the novel as a whole. And we would be hard put to reconstruct the purely *content* side of such a novel as Cantwell's *The Land of Plenty.* The content of a work is its complete *meaning*, and this includes: its politics, conceptions of people, subject, emotions and incidental insights.

A more significant definition of form and content would reveal them *as two aspects of a unified vision.* The basic equipment of a writer is his scheme of values and his grasp of the quality of human activities and relations. These, of course, are conditioned by the prevailing modes of thought and perception. Content would include: the subject in the most literal sense, like the leisure class life in Henry James' novels; specific systems of thought, like Lucretius' philosophy, or Dante's medieval theology; general moral, philosophical or social views which are woven into the texture of action, like the Greek sense of fate, or Shakespeare's sense of tragedy, or Dostoevsky's nihilstic, amoral view of the individual; an intangible outlook, like Faulkner's or Eliot's vision of decay and tension. In examining any specific literary work, however, it is immediately evident that we can point to the content only when we tear it from its context, and and if we bear in mind that it is but a relatively distinct part. Consider the most famous passage in English poetry, Hamlet's soliloquy. As sheer

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content it asks whether it is nobler to yield to adverse fortunes or to resist them. As such, it is, of course, banal and silly. But the question takes its meaning from Hamlet's person and state of mind, in short, from Shakespeare's complete perception of the play of human motives and of the character of Hamlet. And this is given not only in the working out of the plot, in the innuendos of action, but also in the very idiom of the soliloquy which imparts Shakespeare's grasp of behavior in his time. In saying this, the idea of form is included in that of content.

Similarly, in Prousts's study of the upper layers of French society, his view of memory as a store-room of associations, and of time as a stream of events and memories, his delicate but detailed probing of the psychology of his characters, his subtle, winding prose; the structure of nuances in character relation: all make up a single texture. And Joyce's linguistic methods are as much an expression of his perceptions as of his theories of style. The content of *Ulysses* would simply be something else were it not contained in the form of a telescoped association of prose. What we call style is really the writer's instrument for evoking the quality of experience, for the idiom is the unit of style. Hemingway's lean idiom is well adapted to the opaque, casual relations of his characters.

And when Eliot says:

Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As mind is dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar.

the very flavor of the idiom is calculated to convey the note of resignation which makes up the *belief* of the poem.

Since any suggestive idea of *form* would have to include the elements which give shape and quality to content, form should be defined as a *mode of perception.* In fact, some such unconscious view of form has been current in modern poetry. Imagist and surrealist poetry concentrated to such an extent on the perceptive character of literature, as to narrow the range of explicit meaning to the point of extinction. Technical innovationism became the method of verbalizing a sensory approach to experience. Poetry, the most susceptible literary genre to formal preoccuption, was worn to a frazzle. The history of modern poetry serves as evidence that, while form should be regarded as a mode of perception, it cannot be forgotten that it is a way of perceiving a specific literary content. The values, philosophy and subject of an art-work are modulated by the insight of the writer into events and characters which give the structural embodiment of the content. The point of contact to the reader is the final fusion.

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It is not only the stature of Kark Marx as a revolutionist or as a man which is of primary importance to the revolutionary poet. Nor is it the revolutionary stature of Lenin, Liebknecht or Dimitroff, of Joe Hill, Tom Mooney or Sen Katayama—all of whom have appeared as heroic figures in our poetry. It is the peculiar and personal aspect of their lives, experiences, personalities, which finds a responding chord in ours: a contact which, when touched off, produces poetry.

Who are our revolutionary poets and what do they seek and represent? I tried to answer this question recently and found the answer difficult, so great is the confusion among our poets. Particularly is an answer difficult if we seek to examine the poetic material which may influence a poetry revival in America.

All of us can think of several poems which have been notable, which have laid the basis for such a revival. At random: *A Strange Funeral in Braddock,* by Michael Gold; *When the Cock Crows,* by Arturo Giovannitti; one or two others. But a revival depends not on scattered poems, but on poets who are continually productive.

Who are these poets? Again we must eliminate many names; at least until the time when their work establishes their right to be included among the *active, producing* revolutionary poets.

Alfred Kreymborg, author of the mass recitation *America, America,* a much overrated piece of verse, has not written anything revolutionary since it was published a year ago, unless he wishes us to consider his feeble satire in doggerel as revolutionary verse. I think Kreymborg as a poet was best in his early lyrical pieces, in which, incidentally, the lyricism was in the thought, the conception, rather than in the writing.

Maxwell Bodenheim's recent revolutionary attempts have all failed. His best verse appeared in *Minna and Myself* and other very early volumes.

Herman Spector, who wrote several excellent poems about seven years ago, rarely writes or publishes poetry today. The same seems to be true of Joseph Kalar, author of *Papermill* and *Now That Snow Is Falling.* Kalar, never a very prolific writer, has given up poetry to devote himself solely to fiction. Norman Macleod, most prolific of all the poets allied with the working class, has never become sufficiently integrated with this class to write a really revolutionary poem. His main concern, at least in his published work, seems to be with themes which, if they are not individual, are treated in a highly individualized manner. Langston Hughes has not produced a single revolutionary poem which compares favorably with his early work in *The Weary Blues and Fine Clothes to the Jew.* He too has forsaken poetry, to the enrichment of American fiction.

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able to say this. There is no prophetic principle which enables us to foresee the form which a content *must take*. Content from this angle is a slightly different thing; for we have abstracted from specifically modulated substances (in a poem or novel) a general idea of content which is related to our intellectual approach to the world. I mean that in Auden, for example, there is a special kind of satire which gets its meaning and vigor from his form, whereas satire, in general, as a subject, can have a number of forms.

If the preceding analysis is correct, the inevitable conclusion is that specific content and form determine each other, and that content in its translated, intellectual aspect conditions or sets a range for form. Certainly Eliot's values of frustration, restlessness and tension would be weird in the heroic structures of Shakespeare's plays. But within appropriate limits an indefinite number of forms seem possible, and it is only after their appearance that we can see the necessary connections with content.

When confronted with the task of extracting usable elements from our literary heritage, as revolutionary writers are, the problem is a little more complicated. Since the days are gone when writers use the subjects of their predecessors, except in the baldest sense (like war or declassed intellectuals) and from writers in the same tradition (like factory or strike scenes in revolutionary literature), the carryover of content *per se* presents no crtical problem. Certainly the main concern of revolutionary writers is to utilize the new wealth of revolutionary themes. But many hairs have been split over the question of utilizing traditional forms. If, however, form is to be regarded as a function of perception, and, with content, a twin aspect of sensibility, it is evident that form alone cannot be assimilated: the *sensibility* of traditional writers is the assimilable quality. The task of the revolutionary writer is the forging of a relatively new sensibility, compounded of his Marxian outlook, proletarian experience and whatever available literary sensibilities exist. But over short periods of time some constants in sensibility appear to persist. Contemporary literature, despite its conservative values and ideas, articulates a vast range of profound perceptions. Look at T. S. Eliot, who has become the symbol of traditional literature: his reactionary beliefs give his poetry as a whole a nostalgic waywardness marginal to the decisive issues of modern life; but his sensibility has produced a trenchant idiom for the dislocation of bourgeois perspectives amidst a tightening commercial way of life. Some revolutionary poets have been chided for their susceptibility to Eliot's influence. It is interesting to note, however, that none of them has transplanted his complete sensibility; the influence has been limited largely to Eliot's reaction against the eloquent verbosities of earlier romantic poetry, and to his sense of pervasive bourgeois melancholy. The latter has

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often been turned into satire and rejection of the bourgeois way of life. Similarly, an examination of other important contemporary writers would reveal that their importance is dependent on their sensitiveness to current sensibilities, and that these sensibilities are encompassed by the outlook of revolutionary writers. Modification, of course, takes place—but never destruction. If languages forms and their living equivalents are to be regarded as social phenomena, it follows that the art of a new class introduces decisive slants into a *continuum* of sensibility and art works erected upon phases of current sensibility.

Misunderstanding of this process and of the underlying relation of form to content have produced many false notions about the way revolutionary artists are creating forms for their new themes. In discussing "style" as an expression of the values of a class, Sidney Hook writes:

> "We may mean either that the technical elements of a work have grown out of a new social experience or that technical elements already in existence have been fused in a new way or filled with a new content . . . But even in literature it is clear that some formal elements, e.g., the sonnet form, reportage, the autobiographical novel, may be used indifferently to express disparate political and social interests. In painting, realistic technique may serve revolutionary or non-revolutionary purposes. In music, the same tunes are often the battle songs of Fascists in Germany and of Communists in Russia."

In this apparently single idea, Hook makes a variety of errors. First, there is no such distinction between the fusion of old "technique" and the development of new ones from a new social experience. All important art effects a fusion of tradition and experiment. And proletarian art is no exception. Then Hook is using the term *form* to denote those external shapes discussed earlier in this essay. When he argues that "realistic technique" or "reportage" may serve opposed political purposes, Hook is saying little more than that both a Fascist and a Communist wear trousers. It is only by seeing form and content as united by the fundamental sensibility of the artist that the distinction between the form of revolutionary and non-revolutionary art can be recognized. If fascists have used the songs of communists in Germany, it is not through any formal creation, but because the triumphant rhythms, of an Eisler song, for example, can be demagogically adapted to the misguided enthusiasm of fascist masses. In the belief that he is following Engels, who wrote that both he and Marx often neglected the formal side of culture, in the polemical necessity of opposing their contemporaries who denied the economic factor, Hook further argues that the pattern of cultural development often depends upon "certain, relatively irreducible, technical factors, and that for some purposes, an explanation in terms of these technical factors may be valid."

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Again, by failing to see "technical factors" as a part of *form* and their connection with sensibility, Hook is led to bring in the bogey of irreducibility. Marxism, of course, is certainly not a method of reduction, though Hook seems here to imply that some Marxists use it as such; but the sensibility of the writer can be seen to be conditioned and generated by the sensibilities of his time.

Robert Cantwell, a much more sensitive critic of literature, and a writer who is close to the aims and problems of revolutionary literature, has however, overestimated the usable elements for revolutionary literature, I believe, in the work of Henry James. In a recent article in *The New Republic,* Cantwell says:

> (Henry James') "deepest meaning is reserved for those who hold more revolutionary philosophies. They can understand his attitude toward his own class, and perhaps add the indignation that he never expressed; his 'hierarchizing' of characters according to their individual awareness is close to their own concepts of class and political consciousness. The question of technique is another matter, but it can be said of him, as it cannot be said of Proust and Joyce, that the technique he developed is equally good for both sides."

I fail to see how James' "hierarchizing" of characters is close to revolutionary concepts. But aside from that, though it is undoubtedly true that a note of indignation toward the class James described is one element of a revolutionary treatment of the leisured bourgeoisie, it is hard to see how this distinguishes the contribution of James from Proust or any other writer who treated the upper middle-class. Certainly the sensibility of James is removed by many gaps of perception from that of revolutionary writers to-day. That there are some links, as there are to every important work of the past, no one can deny, but the links to James are not especially significant. And the suggestion that the technique of James "is equally good for both sides" again uses "technique" in its most superficial sense. If verbal methods are meant, we should demur on the ground that James' style is ill adapted to the kind of events that Dos Passos, let us say, or Cantwell, himself, are writing about. If the insight of James into people is meant, this precept would hold as well for Balzac, Stendhal, Dostoyevsky and so on. Had Cantwell approached the sensibility of James as the clue to a writers' relation to a new literary tradition, I doubt whether he would have reached these conclusions.

Ultimately, the relation of form to content and sensibility is a matter for special analysis of individual literary works. Only in this way can the precise balance in each instance be seen. But the question cannot even be approached, as I have tried to show, unless there is some agreement on basic definitions, and on the general theoretic relationships of the ele-

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ments of a literary work. The examples I have discussed have been drawn from literature, but with some modification for the peculiarities of each medium, I think the analysis could be extended to music and fine art.

There are many other urgent questions, basic to the Marxian esthetic, such as: a revaluation from the viewpoint of usability of our literary heritage; a method for establishing standards in revolutionary literature and for revising our standards in approaching traditional literature; and a thorough examination of the *meaning* of literary works. As I have attempted to indicate, the extraction of assimilable elements in our literary heritage is closely bound to the problem of form and content. And I am convinced, too, that a grasp of the relations among form, content and sensibility provides the approach to the question of literary values and standards, particularly for revolutionary literature, and to the question of meaning. For most of the problems facing literary critics to-day hinge on the way a work of art is compounded of the writer's philosophy, values, style and emotional temper, how these are related to the social milieu, and how in turn, they are judged by ideological standards. The theory that the writer's sensibility is the prism from which form and content, in their most inclusive sense, emerge; that it is the faculty of esthetic selection and the register of intellectual and aesthetic winds in society—presents the method, I believe, of tackling our other critical problems.

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FOR ERNST THAELMANN

I.

Comrades,
imagine now
a falcon a fury
high
a plane springing sunward
from the flexed wrist of earth
strict at the signal
Thaelmann shall not die
roaring soaring
dividing Time
not into hour and hour
not into days
but into the elate tempo of our
power
up up
through dew-light
through earth-haze
soaring roaring
Thaelmann shall not die
Speed speed ay!
plucks at wires
frantic frantic to wring
gigantic slogan out
the million-fingered wind!
Oh comrades sing and sing
hollow the hoarse lungs out
and strike this gong of sky
shout
Thaelmann shall not die
Here's
here's cloud now
here's like cottonwaste
cloud
hasten and bend
the flight-arc upward so
sharp
climb proud
so so
this million unborn rain
potential snow
hurling shall hammer down
on village and on town
our cry
Rise
Proletariat Toilers of all lands
Thaelmann shall not die
Therefore
with us who soar
who score
the sky
who helmeted ride the air
veined hands exact
—oh joystick eager there!—
declare,
with fuselage and wing
engine and singing screw
bridge space with protest
cry
you and you and you
here there and everywhere

II.

Down
in the guts of earth
down and down
beneath
clamour and glamour
beneath
their willed precarious mirth
masker of fear
beneath
valley and town
let them hear
who would murder and shelve him
away
beat

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through endless invincible hours
like fate
the hammer and hammer of
hammer and hammer of
millions who mine
as they state
the steel-strict slogan the hate
of the proletariat
Thaelmann is ours
As they go as they go
precious with parasite friends
coutning their dividends
through the hollow-eyed countryside
where hunger strangles and rends
let them know
how the chanting express where
they ride
the smoke-scrawled banner of sky
cry,
how each wheel
thunders metrically out on the steel
what the starving the tortured feel
—let them crumple their hands like
flowers—
Thaelmann is ours

III.

Comrades,
a wind now a wind
huge
a tornado
rocking the socketed stars
transforming earth
*We shall win Thaelmann like a
battle*
riving
driving before
the choking broken refuse of a
world
the hideous ideologies of despair
throttling the screamed lie
in your throat
bourgeoisie
*We shall win Thaelmann like a
battle*
a wind! a wind
pointed with steel
with steel
the steel of Lenin
mounting
mounting
up from the tunnelling mine
echoing the twisted cries of the
doomed
weaving to fury
the silent accusation of the dead
and the unspeakable waiting agony
of the women
gathering power
*We shall win Thaelmann like a
battle*
now the conveyor-belt
lined by exhausted hands
and the drained heaviness of our eyes
now the picket-line
now the advancing gas-cloud
fired by police
now the demonstrations
now the hunger-march
now the barricades
up UP
to the exact skyscraper nuzzling the
blue
to the showered leaflets
and the exploding slogan shouted
through space
upward to the plane
that with gold wings writes the sky
finally to the insurection and to
Soviet Power
comrades a wind now a wind
the wind of revolution
*We shall win Thaelmann like a
battle*

RICHARD GOODMAN

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THE SCAB

Arkady Leokum

THE TWO MEN climb up the dark stairs on which the linoleum curves in and out and walk back along the first landing and then they climb with short steps to the second floor.

"If this is another Italian . . . " McHugh says.

Brandt grins "They're tough, eh? Well . . . " he knocks on a door near the stairs, "We'll see." They stand outside the door and stare vacantly, listening. Brandt knocks again sharply.

Finally there is the noise of a chair being moved inside the room and there is a silence as if someone inside were listening too, or waiting. The two men look at each other. It is better when the door is opened at once and they know what they have to face and whom to deal with and they don't have to stand there wondering and waiting.

Brandt is about to knock again when a voice suddenly very close to the door says: "What do you want?"

"Oh open up, will you?" says Brandt. He says it lightly. "You know us, open up."

The man inside opens the door and sticks his head out. He looks them up and down quickly.

"I don't know you."

"Sure! From the union—" the two push their way inside the room. "Why sure you know us,—we're from the union!"

The man comes away from the door slowly; but not too close, he stands a little distance away.

"Well?"

"Well," Brandt looks around the room, "let's sit down anyway." He feels very confident, and McHugh too glances around, because this fellow isn't at all like the Italian was and he is even frightened you can see and this is going to be an easy job generally.

"Now let's sit down," Brandt says again and sits down on the bed. The man follows him. He is thin with very bony

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hands and wrists and a long, drawn face. His chin hangs down like a pump that has sucked his cheeks dry and tightened the skin on his forehead, so that his hair almost stands up, separated.

Brandt unbuttons his coat. "You're new here, ain't you?"

The man is silent.

"What I mean is, this ain't your line,—this ain't your regular trade is it?"

The man looks at him and then down at the bed. He isn't clear about these fellows yet. It looks kind of fishy.

"Well, listen now, why don't you wanna talk? Look,—I'm telling you straight, we're from the union. Not putting anything over on you—we just wanna talk to you and win you over to our side, that's all."

The man's hand fumbles with the blanket, but he remains silent.

"Now when you hit this town—before you hit this town—didn't you know there was a strike?"

The fellow looks up finally. "Sure" he says. "I knew there was a strike" His voice is hoarse. "What do you want anyway?"

"All right, you knew there was a strike," Brandt shifts on the bed. "Now why are you scabbing on us?"

The man rouses himself, a little annoyed by all this softness. "Look here, I'm working an honest living. I got nothing to do with the unions—but I work honest. I work for my bread."

Brandt glances up at McHugh standing beside him. They've got a fool this time, a stupid fellow.

"Well," Brandt says, "don't you know what you're doing?" (They'll have to explain the whole business to him.) "Don't you know what scabbing means?" He looks intensely at the fellow. McHugh grabs a chair and sits down beside them.

The man glances from one to the other as they settle down. What's the matter with these two guys? Are they *union men?* Are these two soft mushy guys union men? He feels he can answer them—because why are they doing it so quietly, talking so easy to him? They're soft!

"Listen," he says to them, "I heard this business about scabbing maybe a million times already. Only I got a job now and I'm holding on to it . . . and I don't need any of that union stuff anyway. I don't go for it."

Brandt suddenly looks at the man again. He begins to

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understand the face now and feels that something is emerging here, this man is going to talk—and he wants to draw him out, let him spin himself out.

"So you're an old scab,eh?"

The man grins momentarily. These must be new fellows and he could tell them a thing or two, these wise union guys.

"Seattle," he says. "It was maybe seven years ago we had a strike there that lasted four months. What did I do? I worked those four months—and let me tell you I made more than I'd made for a year! The unions—"

"Yeah, tell us about the unions."

"Well, there was guys like you coming down to the place every day, picketing and all that stuff—only I didn't fall for it. Seven years ago that was. So you see," he looks up at them, (these must be very new and innocent fellows)—"you're wasting your time here."

Brandt is fascinated by the man's eyes which are grinning with the grin he has suppressed on his face and he feels that the man is enjoying this and thinks that they will plead with him and that maybe he will even enjoy their pleading.

"Well Seattle," Brandt says. "Any other place you scabbed?"

The man glances up, aware of the hatred in the questions now, but these fellows are kind of helpless and they know they are helpless and so he doesn't mind talking.

"Sure," he says. He runs his fingers through his hair. "I've been all over the country, you know—mills, factories, I even did mining once."

Brandt opens his coat wider and shifts on the bed. He has patience and he wants to hear this man out, let him talk himself out.

"Well, and where were you mining?"

"Pennsylvania. Nine dollars a day. I remember that—nine round dollars each and every day."

"So you've made some money on strikes?"

"Now don't get me wrong." The fellow is almost anxious. He will expand on it for these two. (After all?) "I worked regular too, . . . years of it in my time, and I never had a decent coat to show for it! What's the use? See, what's the use for *me?* Unions, bosses, strikes—I say the hell with them all. What does it mean to *me?* But now if they're fighting over something and make conditions where I can work and make

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money—what am I gonna do? See? . . . And don't forget I'm not stealing anything. I'm working for it."

"Well," Brandt says, almost incredulous, and he glances at McHugh, "so you were making nine dollars a day in . . . "

"Pennsylvania."

"—Pennsylvania, and in Seattle, how much did you say you made in Seattle?"

"What's the difference?" The fellow is annoyed by now. "What do you want?"

Brandt appears very calm and he turns to McHugh beside him. "What shall we tell him, McHugh? Do we want anything from him?"

McHugh is glaring at the man and Brandt twists around too so that the man notices suddenly and his face hardens and his lips tighten.

"Hell, why should we want something from you?" Brandt says. "Huh? You worked honest all the time,—ain't he, McHugh?"

The man is half risen and his face is pale now.

"What do you want?" he says and stands up.

Brandt stands up too and moves closer to him. "McHugh, the guy keeps asking us what we want. Can you beat that? We don't want nothing—" the man is back against the wall and Brandt stands before him with his coat open. The man is perspiring and pale and Brandt grabs him. "Nothing, only you're a goddam scab, that's all. You ain't fit to live, that's all."

"Sock him," McHugh says.

"You're a lousy scab and I'm gonna beat you up, that's all." He throws the man back against the wall and his head falls back and strikes the wall. The man is trembling.

"Sock him," McHugh says.

Brandt shakes the man again and he almost falls to the floor so that Brandt drags him up again and holds him straight. The man has his hands raised but he keeps wetting his lips and stares helplessly.

"Sock him will you!" McHugh shouts and moves forward.

"Sure I will," says Brandt, but he only shakes the man and feels him trembling in his hands and sees his eyes staring.

"I'll kill this son of a bitch," he says, but the man is limp in his hands. He holds him by the throat and clenches his fist but he cannot raise his arm and hit this flesh, he cannot. The

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man sudenly stiffens and wriggles out. "Wait!" he shouts. "Wait will you! For God's sake don't hit me!" he clings to Brandt. "Don't hit! I won't scab. Never! I'm not gonna scab!" he clings to Brandt's coat. "Look, I'll picket with you! You'll see—I swear I'll picket with you to-morrow!" his mouth is slobbering and he twists in Brandts hands.

Brandt stares for a moment. "What?" He looks at the man. "What did you say? Did you hear?" he shouts. "Did you hear what he said! He'll *picket with us!* You son of a bitch, you'll picket with us?" he swings into the man's face, and again and then suddenly he lets himself go and beats into the face again and again till the man's head is bouncing against the wall and he falls to the floor.

"Picket with us?" Brandt shouts and McHugh grabs his arm and pulls him away. But he twists back, his eyes wild, and McHugh pulls him to the door. "Did you hear what the bastard said? Picket with us!" Brandt shouts and McHugh drags and pulls him down the stairs, but he can't calm him and he drags him out.

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IF A MAN BITES A DOG*

Edwin Seaver

MR. ALFRED ROSENBERG champed at the bit on the threshold of Mr. Schmuck's office, flecks of saliva gathering at the corners of his mouth as he waited fidgeting for the lawyer to look up from the memorandum he was scratching on a pad.

"Say, did you hear the news?" he exploded, unable to contain himself longer, tugging at the creased and soiled newspaper bulging from the pocket of his jacket. "They caught Two-gun Dowling."

Mr. Schmuck shifted the extinct butt of a cigar from east to west with a convulsive twitch of his lips.

"Whatsat?" he said without looking up.

"They got Twogun Dowling. You know, the kid that shot the cop. Jesus! You should've seen the mob."

Mr. Schmuck tore off the memorandum, slipped it under the glass paperweight and leaned back in his swivelchair comfortably, clasping his hands behind his thick neck.

"You know what Horace Greeley said don't you?" he said.

Mr. Rosenberg looked bewildered. "You mean go west young man, go west?"

"Go west hell!" said Mr. Schmuck with disgust. "Say, where were you educated anyhow? I mean the one about the man biting the dog."

"Aw, that wasn't Greeley," Mr. Rosenberg said. "That was Dana, the editor of the Sun."

"He's telling me!" said Mr. Schmuck indicating his neophyte with an indulgent thrust of his chin. "I suppose it was Greeley who wrote Two Years Before The Masthead, eh wiseguy?"

"No, that was his father. I mean it was Dana's father."

"You mean his grandmother, don't you?" Mr. Schmuck gave a high squealing laugh oddly at variance with his heavy,

* Excerpts from the forthcoming novel, *Between the Hammer and the Anvil.*

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aggressive frame. It was evident that he was in high fettle this afternoon.

"Hey, Nudnick!" he bellowed suddenly.

"What d'you want?" A pale whining voice floated up from the other side of the glazed glass partition, followed by the presence of Mr. Nathan Nudnick himself, in the flesh, on the threshold of Mr. Schmuck'c office, his pale bulging harassed little eyes darting back and forth like a shuttle.

"Who was it said that about the man biting the dog?" said Mr. Schmuck.

The look of habitual worriment on Mr. Nudnick's countenance deepened.

"A man should bite a dog?" he said incredulously. "What kind of a . . .?"

"Oh for Christ's sake!" Mr. Nudnick said. "Write a letter to the Times about it why don't you?"

"There's a Mr. John Doe here to see you," Miss Bitterman interrupted elbowing her way into the office.

"Doe? Who the hell's John Doe?" asked Mr. Schmuck.

"I don't know, sir. He says he wanted to see you about something important."

"Aw, you know," Mr. Rosenberg said. "One of the Blumenthal accounts."

"Humph!" Mr. Schmuck blew a mighty wind through his nose. "Alright, tell him to wait."

"Wait a minute," he called after the departing secretary. "Get me the Blumenthal file will you? . . . And close the door after you."

"What about him?" he asked Mr. Rosenberg when the door was shut, jerking his head toward the outer office.

Mr. Rosenberg grimaced and shrugged his shoulders, then pointed emphatically to the floor with both thumbs down.

"Just another poor sucker," he said.

"What do you mean another poor sucker?" Mr. Schmuck said. "Say Nudnick, did you get that? That's what law school does for 'em nowadays. Throwing up a case before he even gets started."

Mr. Nudnick smiled apologetically, his hand groping for the doorknob behind him.

"You'll excuse me gentlemen," he said unconvincingly. "I've got work to do," edging himself out from under his partner's contemptuous heavy-lidded stare.

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"He's got work to do," Mr. Schmuck said when the door was closed. "If he had any more he might have a whole case."

"Listen kid, get wise to yourself," he said suddenly sitting erect and pointing his finger dramatically at Mr. Rosenberg. "If you're going to begin letting these guys tell you a sob story you'll be licked from the start. You'll never get anywhere that way. I'm telling you this for your own good. Say, if I believed all they tell me I'd've died of a broken heart long ago. Don't worry, I was soft like you, too, when I first got out of law school. But I had it knocked out of me pretty quick, see. Boy, you got to learn not to trust your own mother in this game, take it from me."

"I guess it's a skin game alright," Mr. Rosenberg said, gloomily trying to tighten a button that had worked loose on his jacket and was hanging now by a single thread.

"What d'you mean skin game!" Mr. Schmuck spat out his cigar butt into the cuspidor under his desk. "Sure it's a skin game. What aint a skin game? It's not your funeral because some boob owes your client money, is it?"

Miss Bitterman entered bearing a cluttered file and placing it on the lawyer's desk turned to leave the office, like an automaton, prodding under her hair with the blunt end of a pencil.

"I suppose not," said Mr. Rosenberg. "Just a case of dog eat dog, eh?"

"You said it! Dog eat dog. And how!"

Opening the top drawer of his desk Mr. Schmuck took out a fresh stogie, bit off the tip and stuck the cigar between his strong yellow teeth.

"Say, how about that guy Shreves?" he said striking a match to his cigar and emitting puffs of smoke. "Did you find the bastard yet?"

"No, missed him again," Mr. Rosenberg said turning toward the door.

"Wait a minute. What d'you mean missed him again? I thought you said you had lots of experience."

"What am I supposed to be a detective or something?" Mr. Rosenberg said squirming impatiently.

"That's what I'm paying you for ain't it?"

"You're paying me!" Mr. Rosenberg said, a trace of bitterness in his voice. "I don't know as you've ever paid me for anything I haven't done."

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Mr. Schmuck's glassy blue eyes narrowed as he mouthed his cigar.

"Say, what's getting into you these days, Rosie?" he said grinning. "Got a burr under your tail or something?"

"Never mind what's under my tail," Mr. Rosenberg said. "I tell you I'm getting fed up with it all, fed up, d'you understand?" he said sawing his hand eloquently across his throat.

"Aw tie a can to that crap," Mr. Schmuck said waving his hand at the law student. "That won't get you anywheres. I understand. Sure, I know you get tired and discouraged and all that kind of thing. It seems like a long hard road to the top. But you got to keep plugging along, see."

Mr. Rosenberg lifted his hands as if to remonstrate, but no words came and he let his hands fall hopelessly to his side.

"Well," he mumbled, "I guess I'll get going."

"Alright," Mr. Schmuck said slamming shut the drawer of his desk. "Tell that guy to come in on your way out."

Mr. John Doe seated himself gingerly on the edge of a chair, his knees pressed close together, his hands gripping tensely the rim of the still correct stiff felt hat in his lap.

"I'm Mr. Doe," he said clearing his throat as he leaned toward the desk.

Mr. Schmuck continued to thumb the papers in the spread open file.

"Yeah," he said vaguely.

"I came to see you about this . . . er . . . notice you sent me," Mr. Doe said fumbling for the summons in the inner pocket of his jacket and bringing it to light with trembling fingers.

"Yeah," said Mr. Schmuck.

"I wanted to ask you if you couldn't please do something for me. I mean is it really necessary for me to appear in court tomorrow morning?"

Mr. Schmuck glanced up truculently.

"What do you mean really necessary?" No, not if you prefer to face contempt proceedings."

"Contempt proceedings . . .! You mean . . .?"

"You wouldn't like that, eh? Well, take my advice and show up then."

"But I mean couldn't we settle this outside of court?"

Mr. Schmuck shoved aside the file and leaned back in his chair, pulling vigorously at his almost extinguished cigar. An

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ash fell to his firmly packed vest and filtered down into his lap.

"That's up to you," he said studying his clothes carefully as he brushed himself with his hand.

"I don't understand."

"There's nothing to understand about it. Con you pay?"

"But my dear man," protested Mr. Doe politely as one with a soft answer might seek to turn away wrath, "if I had the money with which to pay I would have done so before this. You wouldn't have had to send me a summons."

"Well, can you pay anything? Can you make me an offer?"

"But I told you, I told your young man when he came to see me the other night, if I could make a settlement . . ."

"Alright, don't make a song and dance out of it," Mr. Schmuck barked. The softness of the man before him was getting on his nerves. "I'm not here to argue with you."

A feeling of humiliation, of futility, of weariness pervaded Mr. Doe's being, like a drug, making heavy his limbs.

"But I didn't mean to argue," he protested hopelessly.

"Alright, then come to court tomorrow." Mr. Schmuck closed the file with an air of finality as much as to say "the interview is at an end," and picking up a pencil made a notation on his scratchpad.

All the time he was talking the painful crease between Mr. Doe's bewildered eyes had been deepening as if under the blows of an unseen chisel. Now he stroked his forehead abstractedly with the fingers of one hand as if he would smooth away the deep parallel lines that puckered his brow. Why am I humiliating myself like this? he thought. What is this man to me that I should have to appeal to him like this? Why should he treat me like a dog? I wouldn't talk to a dog that way, no, not even to a dog. His head felt hot and ached dully but his fingers were cold as ice and as he gripped his temples between thumb and forefinger he shivered and it seemed to him that somewhere lost in his brain was a thought that was struggling to come to the surface, a thought that needed desperately to be expressed, but it was drowning, it was suffocating and he was powerless to rescue it.

"Couldn't you give me a little more time at least?" he said rising from his chair. "Maybe in another month or two . . ."

Mr. Schmuck toyed with his pencil and puffed at his cigar in an attitude of momentous decision.

"Look here," he said suddenly glancing up at Mr. Doe and

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pointing his pencil at him. "You seem to be a square shooter, see. I don't want to hound you. I know you're honest alright. It ain't that. We're all honest. If I'm on your neck this way please remember that my clients are on mine, too. Now what do you owe 'em? About two hundred bucks, eh? Alright, you pay me a hundred and we'll call it quits."

Mr. Doe shook his head slowly.

"You don't understand," he said weariedly. "I haven't got the money."

"Alright, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make it even easier for you." Mr. Schmuck was melting under the warmth of his own magnanimity. "I'll make it seventy-five, see, and tell my client that's all that's coming to him."

"Is it a go?" Mr. Schmuck said actually reaching for the phone. "I'll call him up right now and make him take it if you'll say the word."

Mr. Doe shrugged his shoulders. "What's the use of talking?" he said unhappily turning to go. "You don't understand. Nobody can understand."

What was there to understand, when it came to that? If you were walking along a straight road, or maybe between the tracks of a railroad—incalculably sudden and vivid the memory assailed Mr. Doe of himself as a boy walking the railroad ties, his shoes slung over his shoulder, the ties heated by the fierce sun of August burning his naked feet; he couldn't recall how he happened to be there, it didn't matter anyway, but the memory was fraught with a piercing nostalgic sadness that brought the quick hot tears to his eyes— if you were walking along that way the tracks seemed to come together in the distance and that was called perspective. It was an illusion really, only it wasn't an illusion, the way was getting narrower and narrower all the time and you felt crushed, slowly remorselessly crushed and stifled, not just because of this debt or that but everything together squeezing you tighter and tighter and tighter . . .

Mr. Doe breathed with difficulty as he put on his hat and groped for the doorknob.

"Goodbye," he said his own voice strange to him.

The telephone bell was ringing.

"Hello!" called Mr. Schmuck yanking at the receiver and staring vaguely into space. "Hello! Hello! Whatsat . . .?"'

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CITY OF MONUMENTS

Washington, 1934

Be proud you people of these graves
    these chiseled words this precedent
From these blind ruins shines our monument.
Dead navies of the brain will sail
    stone celebrate its final choice
    when the air shakes, a single voice
a strong voice able to prevail:
Entrust no hope to stone although the stone
shelter the root—see too-great burdens placed
with nothing certain but the risk
set on the infirm column of
the high memorial obelisk
erect in accusation sprung against
a barren sky taut over Anacostia:
give over, Gettysburg! a word will shake your glory—
blood of the starved fell thin upon this plain,
this battle is not buried with its slain.
        Gravestone and battlefield retire,
        the whole green South is shadowed dark,
        the slick white domes are cast in night.
        But uneclipsed above this park
        the veteran of the Civil War
        sees havoc in the tended graves
        the midnight bugles blown to free
        still unemancipated slaves.
Blinded by chromium or transfiguration
we watch, as through a microscope, decay:
    down the broad streets the limousines
advance in passions of display.
Air glints with diamonds, and these clavicles
emerge through orchids by whose trailing spoor
the sensitive cannot mistake
    the implicit anguish of the poor.
The throats incline, the marble men rejoice
careless of torrents of despair.
Split by a tendril of revolt
stone cedes to blossom everywhere.

—Muriel Rukeyser

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THE NEW HOUSEKEEPER

Ben Field

AFTER THE DEATH of old Murf, the farmhand's wife, there was constant wrangling over a new housekeeper. The boss could pay only half wages because of the hard times. There was the big farmhouse to clean and feeding 4 men all year and a dozen during harvest. The boss, who spent most of his time at his cider mill, wanted his sister and his niece from Gun Hill to keep house for a couple of months. But none of the hired men wanted the loud, barrel-bellied woman. Mule, foreman, was especially set against women: "Nosing around, driving their skirt around us, setting the boss against the best hand. This ain't the first farm I worked on." Mule wanted a man cook. Anyway the Gun Hill woman and her daughter couldn't come just then.

Mule's younger brother Steve was for hiring Mame Smith, the daughter of the poor village bell ringer. Mule swore he wouldn't touch that whore's cooking with a 10-foot pole. Old Murf agreed. You did have to be on guard with a woman who had lain with so many fellows that stretched out they could make a fence clear across the country. You had to have a fine upstanding girl made out of dew and iron.

A big Canuk woman hired out. Here was one should stick like a devil's pitchfork. Especially after Steve had brushed against her, felt her breasts were hard as iron tables. But everything she made tasted of wash. The hired men spent more time in the backhouse than in the barn. Even the spunky little boss was laid up, could not tend to his cider mill. Told to go, the big woman broke down and bawled like a baby.

The truckdriver with applejack for the city combed the employment agencies. A couple of able girls backed out soon as they heard they'd be all alone with 4 men. After lots of bargaining, one strapping Irish girl came along. But every Saturday afternoon her fellow drove up from the city. Every Sunday she had to go to church. The men had to eat cold dinners. The

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boss spoke once, he spoke twice. He said sorry, she was fired. She fired back, "I ain't a horse. Think you can keep me with hay and cider like those 3 rubes?"

The boss flushed. "That ain't the point. We got to eat."

"I got to eat too."

She wouldn't leave until the boss paid her full month's wages. She locked herself in the room ready for a long siege. The boss had to pay her up to get rid of her.

Ramheaded Steve, his face twitching always as if the world were a ewe, stuttered, "Now there was a clean one for you. I says Mame Smith, she's out of work. The boss had his tushes in her before he got married, got himself widowed. Now he's forgotten. There's human nature for you."

Old Murf explained it differently. He had once owned the village blacksmith shop, the gear box of all that happened in the countryside, the smoky nest of the political hawks. And there he had become as skillful handling the world's difficulties as shoeing the heaviest work stallion. He said, "It's this depression that's making people act so fouled against each other. We had a whole regiment of women already, each one a regular pisscutter. Wait, we're only in the general hall of it. It's this depression."

"Depression, hell," said foreman Mule. "It's always been the same. The best of them's cut out like the worst. Getting into tantrums, making us cut and cover when we could afinished plowing weeks ago. I'll get a man cook."

Mule had in mind the young fellow working in the village lunchwagon. The young fellow said, "Who's crazy now? I was born on a farm and ain't recovered yet. Why don't you get a girl? Ain't the justice of the peace a good judge of hide no more?"

Mule spat in disgust. "The boss ain't justice of peace no more."

Murf took on the job of cooking. The farmhouse stunk like a stall. He made biscuits so hard you could play horseshoes with them. Mule was satisfied so long as the field work went on. But his brother swore he'd eat cowfeed first.

The boss had to go look for a new housekeeper himself. They didn't hear from him for 2 days. He must be waiting to knock down a girl cheapest or have one pay him for being hired, said Murf. When the Ford did lurch into the yard, the runty boss hopped out. He looked more than ever shaggy as a wild

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hog, his head heavier than the rest of his body. After him a broad gaunt girl with a satchel from the end of which a red underthing stuck.

The three men were around the tractor. Mule grabbed his monkey wrench with a snort and buried himself in his tractor. But at sharp 12 the men tramped in for grub.

The boss was in the kitchen giving a hand, giving her the old line about her being boss. She limped around, her yellow hair flat down as a pieplate, cheeks hollow and pale. She smiled anxiously, showing big strong teeth white as skinned butternuts. She stood still while the men lowered their heads to the plates. She hurried over to pick up surly Mule's fork. They batted heads. The blow brought tears to her eyes. "Excuse me, Mister."

Murf winked. "Another skirt leaving her mark on Mule."

The scar across Mule's forehead filled with blood.

The boss clapped his hands, his own roar of laughter softened him more. "Take a load off your legs, girl."

Elsa rubbed her head. "Ain't used to sitting when you been a waitress."

After dinner old Murf and Steve cidered themselves up around the keg on the kitchen porch. But Mule couldn't even drink. "Hell with her, Dane or Swede woman or the hell she come from. We been doing our best to run the place right. And that plug-headed boss—hell! I told him a woman'll always throw her monkey in the engine."

Mule, that great sergeant of a man with an old-fashioned epaulet of a moustache, was off women since that fierce battle in the backroom of the Phrenologist place where the gypsy fortune teller chattered hoglatin. She would empty a man for as low as 2 bits behind the sign which faced the street: a picture of a man's head with the skull chopped open to show the brain like a green helmet, and the notice that "The face is the mirror of the soul." A drunken state trooper scratched the "s" into an "h" one night. Mule hawed out it was a roaring insult. The trooper split Mule's head with his gun. The three were arrested, the place locked up. Esmeralda screeched curses at Mule and herself for not having dosed him up and sent him to keep his sick brother Slim company in the lunatic asylum. It was after this that Mule and Steve went to work for the halfpint justice of the peace for next to nothing.

The boss hurried out to the porch. He said in a business-

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like way, "Couldn't help it, Mule. Told her you fellows was boss. She's on trial. We know how to keep away from them now. Same hard luck story, tossed around from one job to the other like a hot potato." He raised his voice so he could be heard at the other end of the farm. "Work girls are still plentier than pumpkin seed or stone." He whipped away in the car to the cidermill.

The girl was hired to feed the men who fed the mill. Before prohibition the cidermill could shoot streams of money into the boss's pockets some of which leaked into the farm. Now not only the apples but also the corn, the milk, the hogs slaughtered off under the Roosevelt reduction plan were pumped into the mill. And so all spring long the men plowed their guts sore to save the mill. Mule on the tractor from dawn till day sank like lead. Steve behind the walking plow, his twitching face turning lean and hornhipped. Murf on the sulky, full of hard cider to oil up the old machinery of his bones.

The girl rushed around with that wild hunted look of hers like a mouse caught in a threshing machine. Only once did Steve catch her resting. She was smoking a butt, her legs thrown up on a chair, one of them bound as in a legging. She baked fresh bread every day. She brought a second breakfast out to the fields. Steve cut himself a half dozen new sharp-smelling goosequills for toothpicks. And the old blacksmith dropped into a rocker near the cookstove at the end of the day, his washy blue eyes closing wearily. He sniffed the roast. "Like old days." He blinked thru the window. Over the hill behind the beeches the cemetery mound with a marker like a breadboard. Then he cracked up, "One day nearer hell, boys."

Only Mule kept sullen. When Elsa gave him special sandwiches because he was out on the far fields, he left them behind in the machine shed. When she served paper napkins the boss's wife had stored away years ago, his she found later in the backhouse. When she asked how clover seed was drilled, he growled, "With a shotgun." She had to search for his clothes. She was the only housekeeper who washed the men's clothes, socks full of dirt and grit like a cock's gizzard, shirts and pants foul from the Black Leaf Forty spray.

The boss came around to look over the apple spraying. He said to Mule, "Boy, I see you ain't happy. Out she goes."

Mule said, "Hell with her. Those two fellows think she's

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quiet. Quiet be damned. She's breeding trouble. The best of them: poker face and play one jack against the other."

The boss went into the house. Then he got into his car and drove to the mill.

Steve and Murf squatted at the foot of the ash tree, Murf tickling his pet toad and feeding it flies. He said, "The boss is a sly guy. He'll take on a man cook now because with summer he don't care how the place goes to hang so long as he gets a fellow who can sling hash for the whole harvest gang. The best trying woman can't stand the gaff. Now that she's cleaned up the place, she can go to hell. Makes believe to the world Muley wants it."

The kitchen door banged. Out tore the girl wild as wind. "Where's Mule?"

The old man dropped his toad.

She stumbled thru the yard towards the machine shop.

When the two men crashed in after her, she was flagging Mule with both hands. "Feeding you till it runs out of your ears, washing your shity shirttails. Scared of my own shadow. What did I ever do you? You!"

Mule's big ears burned.

"Worked in a tobacco factory. Searched our drawers afraid we was hiding cartons up us. Linking sausages the strawboss sawing away at us, speed up. Waiting, waiting—look!" She flashed up her dress. Her right leg swollen thick with blue veins. "What you got against me? Here's my Blue Eagle stamp."

She started screaming, "What do you want? Setting the boss against me. We—we should be together. Got a place to sleep, to eat. What do you want, you?" She threw her dress high above her big white kness. She rushed back to the kitchen, her wild face torn thru her hair.

Mule stood spiked to the ground, his scar filled with blood.

Steve stared at his brother. He scraped the sweat off his forehead.

"Jesus Christ, Jesus H. Christ," said the old man slowly, reverently.

Mule said at last thickly, "Hell with her." He stuck his head after the the monkey wrench into the tractor.

The two walked back. From the room above the kitchen: "My God, oh my God."

The old man turned pale. He stomped up and knocked at

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the door. The door was locked. She kept on sobbing.

They sat at the foot of the ash. The seed keys paddled in the night breeze.

Steve tried his goosequill. He tried his corncob. He wasn't comforted. The hard man with his moist nose and curly hair waited for Murf to speak. But Murf was too busy with the toad.

Steve had gone thru many women as thru a fence, but every time he came across a new one he was stumped and terrified. He said, "She talks like a whore."

Murf twanged like a jew's harp. "It's this depression. Lots of women, straight as a shingle, had to take on with men. Two trades got hurt bad. They ain't fixed codes for them yet. Barbering and whoring. A man shaves himself and bulls his own fist."

"Human nature, it sure changed."

"Human nature's the same. People get set against each other like fighting cocks. Hard times digs a pit for them. Republicans against Democrats, and you don't know whom to put money on. Read the papers, Stevey."

The old blacksmith was the only one who read the papers. Evenings he would read over his cider until the print would swarm over him like carrion flies.

"Sure," said Steve. "With Mule, it's this way. It ain's only hisself, he can't forget Slim in the asylum jail. That woman dosed him up. It went to his head. He can't forget it."

"That's it. Yet that there little hotbox was only earning a living for herself. You got to consider that. Some of them big shot farmers along the river and up on Gun Hill, I heard the boss's fat sister say so, they hired housegirls and egged them on and salted them around for the hired men. Fine girls was forced that way. How the hell did they keep all them foreign hired men they got from Castle Garden? But then if a man ain't got it, he goes crazy; if he's got it, he goes crazy. Only the more a man you be the less happy in all ways. It's an ache always. When you're born you fight and wrestle to get out. Soon after, you start bawling for it. And the rest of the days of your life, you get into all sorts of scrapes because of it. Seems like human nature was built by guess and by God, not by square and level."

The tractor exploded suddenly in the machine shed. The bed jangled in the girl's room. Murf groaned and crept to his

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room. The younger man hunched up listening. He tiptoed up and nosed the keyhole.

Next morning the boss said, "Mule, she says you fellows want her."

Mule jerked his head from the plate. The other two stopped chewing.

Elsa took up the coffee pot without the dishcloth and ground it against her belly.

Mule's beg jaw quivered. "Hell, who?"

Her broad face twisted into a knot hacked with fear and hate.

He stared at the calendar. He switched his eyes to the window thru which one could see the fields heavily shouldering timothy and clover. He said slowly, "Swapping cooks now'll kind of stall us. Come winter'll be different."

The boss stared at him and then at the girl as if matching them. "Well." He chewed his pork. "You're boss, man. We'll let this blow over till damn harvest's done."

When the men tramped out, she stood in the corner breathing uneasily, greasing her burnt fingers with pork fat.

Elsa served as many as 15 men at the table thru harvest. She limped around, a sweat rag jammed into her waist. Once Steve saw something like a bloody little cottontail on the kitchen porch, looked as if the dogs had brought it in. Murf said it had dropped from her, hurrying the devil out of herself. Once bringing in more bread, she keeled over on the floor. Young Bill Fluellan, who sorted the apples, threw a glass of cider into her face. She shivered up. "Tastes good," she laughed. Only once did she complain. That was to the three bunched around the ash tree. "Still treating me like poison with a skirt on?"

Steve twitched and looked at Mule. Mule stalked off to the machine shed. The old man scratched his head.

That night Murf helped with wiping the dishes. He said later, "I ain't planning to get corns, horns, splinters sleeping with her. Jesus H. knows I'm old enough to be her father. My porker's always in the bush. Time it could root it had the ring in its snoot. After all, she's a hard trying girl. This is the first girl after Sarah I'm taking a shine too."

Mule growled, "Hell with you all." But said nothing about swapping cooks.

Fall went. The boss was so busy with the mill he even slept there. Wild geese had all flown south, woodchucks buried

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themselves. And now because the men had only 12, 13 hours work instead of 16, 18, time lay like earth upon them.

Even on Sundays between milkings there was no place to go. The village movie, baseball and football had flown off with good times. The only excitement was the bull breaking another fence or the horses getting on the tracks and walking toward the city. Murf's toad had stored itself away in some hole in the garden. Steve got himself drunk, blundered around, blobber-tongued. Mule spent all his spare time tinkering with the tractor. He would take it apart, oil and grease it for the thousandth time, listen to it while it ran like a peacock. He would sit in the saddle, be bucked up and down until the hardness in that iron jack of his body seemed to get out of him. But he couldn't eat or sleep with it.

The only one who seemed easy was Elsa. She cooked, baked, made the place shine like glass, sent off to the sales order store for clothes. She read the romances the boss's wife had gulped down in the old days before the "Caesar's operation" had killed her and the baby, driving the boss to bury himself in the cidermill. She banged on the old melodeon. She made it easier for Murf to fight the winter when old hands find themselves hanging by a last thread over the boneyard. At night they played cards. She taught him the Danish game: "Will you go into the park with me?" And the old man would wink slowly, "I'll make 30 marks day and night if it's the woods instead."

But the two brothers sat together in the kitchen near the cookstove, mum, keeping an eye on each other, all the life run out of them.

With the coming of spring the men looked lean and blinky, the earth dripping slowly off their lids. The sun rose like a ballcock every morning drawing water. They fretted waiting for the rain to be pitched out of the sky.

But Elsa had straightened out. The wild look was gone. Her eyes were clean as whistles. She left off wearing the legging, her fattened hips shook as she bustled about in kitchen and garden.

The boss was making a last desperate effort to save the mill. The new political rulers, Green Lantern Party, consisting of wild jackass Republicans and progressive Democrats wouldn't let old timers like him root in the pork barrels. The farm must save the mill. He ordered more lots plowed for hay. Last year

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because of the drouth hay sold high with all the small farmers peeping for it.

Mule went up on the ridge with the tractor. This was virgin soil, rocks the size of corncribs on the east end. He plowed all day, took a couple of hours off, plowed all night. In the morning Elsa banged the old iron wheel for breakfast. Steve whistled. They couldn't hear the tractor. As they were eating their oatmeal, they heard a crawling on the porch. It was Mule, red as a slug, blood bubbling from all over him.

The tractor had turned over, smashed his face in, collar bone felt broken, one arm torn up in the biceps. Hospital was the place for him. But there was no money. He spent most of his $30 a month with the little Steve saved after boozing to make young Slim comfortable in the asylum. Murf had been saving to get a stone on the old woman's grave. Mule wouldn't touch Murf's. The shaggy little boss paced the room. "I know how you feel, man. I promised you fellows bonuses, couldn't give them because the mill took it all. It ain't a spider in me. That mill's got me coming and going." He screwed up his unshaven face, couldn't look his foreman in the eye.

Mule was in a bad fix. Even the tractor gone back on him. He wouldn't let them move him from bed, let him greenrot away.

Here Elsa stepped in. She would nurse him. She hovered over him with her long nails like a brier patch and the smell of hot bread and meat mixed with the milky smell of a woman who is in good health and sweats easily. Or she sat near the window peeling potatoes, her neck bent so you could see the bone and the hair yellowish, thick enough for cropping.

Steve kept his eyes cocked on her. Believing Mule fast asleep, he breathed out once, "What a rump she's built up for herself. Fattened out like a smokehouse." His face twitched, his eyes watered as if he had been given a blow in his nose.

Mule roared out, "You heller, good-for-nothing rumhound getting ready for trouble!"

Steve fell back. "I'm my own boss, damn you."

Mule kept getting queerer the more girl tended to him. He lay for hours, the big bones of his hands heaped on his sunken stomach. Evenings when the two men and the housekeeper kept him company, he never said a word, his face yanked to the wall.

Murf said, "Here's a good riddle, people. Why's a woman a better haypitcher than a man?"

Steve slapped his knees, guffawing.

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"It's this way, girlie. A woman can take a whole—."

Mule jumped up in bed, grinding out like a cornblower in his fury.

Elsa laughed, "Come on, boy, be a sport. It's only a little fun. And I've been married once too."

Murf swiftly cackled the answer.

Elsa lay back, laughing till her breasts leaped and picked at her dress.

She hummed her way downstairs to play the melodeon. The boss came out of his office with his chewed cigar. She sang in her deep breaking voice of sweet Susanna with the buckwheat in her mouth and the tear in her eye, of love's old sweet song, of home, sweet home, for no matter where you roam there is no place like home, sweet home.

Mule and Steve said nothing. They lay on their cots, sons of a poor Cayuga Indian renter and a Yankee girl, two of the old tough breed of farmhands, who started working the earth and girls when they were 12. Young Slim, the apple of their eye, the only one of a large brood to even get to high school. Last time they walked with queer Slim in the asylum garden he couldn't add 2 and 2, caught a pigeon on the path, bit her head off, mouth stuffed with blood and feathers. The little Mule had ever been able to grind together wiped out by Stayhot Electric Iron Corporation whose shares peddled to farmers, hands, village shopkeepers dropped low as horsedock and drove half a county into the ditch. "Home, Sweet Home": the Toolbox, Turkey Roost, the Phrenologist. Always the cylinders in another man's machine, the drills in another man's earth for another man's grain.

And Elsa playing softly now, "Goodnight, Ladies."

The boss sighed, "Makes a man forget the darned mill. I'll get the tuner come fix the old box."

Murf said, "The boss'll skin a louse and build a butcher shop to sell the fat. Listen to him. What's he up to now?"

But Mule turned to the wall, his body sprawled as if it were being yanked in all directions, didn't answer goodnight with Murf peeling off his socks, groaning: "There's a gal with the goods. Makes a man feel he can build a home round her. The old woman'd think such language was bleeding old Christ a second time. More a sister to a man than anything else. Harder to handle than high water after Stayhot wiped us clean and grabbed the shop, forcing us to another fellow's land. When

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she was sick and I says to her how when the school trustee Ed Greener's wife was adying and he climbed in bed with her and the doctor swore that made her live 5 years longer, she just started bawling like a babe, wringing her cut-up hands, crying when would old fools like me grow up t'see the dick don't drive away all pain, make bread and—and . . ." He raked his old poll. "Neither did Jesus on a stick help her. Yeh, she thought if women bossed the world . . . but there's this women suffrage, and the world's still jammed tight like a burdock up the tail of a horse, and the horse not half broke. Stayhot, the banks busting like mushrooms, this cutting everything little by little off a man. . . . When a fellow's alone, no home really his own, he don't act right, don't work right. That's gospel truth. He takes to bulling his own fist when maybe his fist should be knocking hell out of them that's run us down to—."

Steve roared he go bull himself to sleep.

"That's what I'm adoing," cackled the old man. He belched, fussed, tossed, and groaned all night thru. And in the morning, he was sick as a dog still hanging over the vomit of his past.

Mule dragged himself out of bed to help the old man. He couldn't stand bed any longer. Bill Fuellan was tearing around the farm on the tractor.

Bill was a tall husky lad, full of spit and song, with a nose sharp as a cornknife and a keen black eye. He had a rattlebox car. He started taking Elsa out for ice cream, to the dancehall over the village drugstore.

The boss cursed Bill in the presence of his men. "This damned catting around. Mule was right. But she was acting right, so I let it blow." But the boss didn't say anything to Elsa, only lowered his head as if to slash into her like an angry boarhog.

Murf pawed at her shoulder. "I got a fatherly interest in you, girl. The more you listens the farther I go. We don't want trouble. Now Bill's a good lad. He wouldn't hurt a girl fly. Only he likes to jabber, he's half your age, he's—."

"Ready to marry and take care of me," Elsa finished with a laugh. "But is the boss sore?'

"Better find out. He's a sly feller, don't know what bug's in him half the time."

The boss shoved away from his desk when she asked. "You're the boss," he said looking up at her two loose breasts

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picking at each other like cocks in a bag. He cleared his throat. "Don't let that wild Buffalo Bill rope you. We need you yet a while." He threw her the front key.

Upstairs Steve went around and around like a horse with a boom bringing up water, waiting for Bill to come back. Mule was working on the floor over a small engine. He too jerked up his head at the first faint sounds of the car. Bill swaggered in with his pipe going pup, pup, pup.

First time he swore he couldn't get at anything but her work hand. She was too uneasy about her job. Second time he said he had more luck. That belly of hers was as firm and curved like a banjo and—.

Mule got up slowly, the big jaw of his hitched forward in fury. "You little spitbug you, coming here to start trouble, meddling—."

Bill roared back, standing his ground. "If that gun didn't knock your little brains out, you'd feel the same way, you crazy old gelding. What's this to you? Hell, she can take care of herself. You and who else'll drive me off?"

They trooped downstairs. Behind the silo. There was enough moon.

Bill feinted, drove a left cross. He laughed and danced around, tattooing Mule's collarbone and sore arm, driving those big ears back with a twisting first. Mule towered above him swinging those long bats of his arms in wild roundhouse swings that always cut Bill down in the end, knocking the breath out of him, knocking him cold in the moon watering the ring. Mule waited against the silo hoarsely breathing.

Every time he got up, Bill ground out, "I'll bull her yet before you'll."

It wasn't long, however, before he was so punchdrunk that he kept reeling into Mule's first. He dropped on Mule's knee, in his great pain butting Mule's crotch. Mule caught him as on the horn of an anvil. He hammered his head until the bones cracked.

The seconds washed up Bill with cider. They poured cider down his throat and over his clothing. They dragged him into his car. Steve drove it half way across the county, Murf following in the milk truck. They stopped in front of a doctor's place, rang the bell, and drove off, the truck banging like a shotgun.

Couple of days later, the boss returned from the mill with the news that Bill was in a bad auto smashup, that's why he

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hadn't been showing up. Elsa twisted her fingers, eager to get in touch with him. But it was like trying to ring the devil to find Bill. The hands winked at each other. The boss was in it too, seemed to have been behind the silo during the fight. And Mule, his arm harnessed up in a sling, had been butted by the bull.

But even before the excitement was over, the boss wrote to his niece. He wanted one of the family to come down to help him in his cidermill fight. The Gun Hill girl came down. She was stiff as a poker to Elsa, had big red lips like a burn, could cook and clean. Now that she had lost her job in the Gun Hill Five and Ten she might as well be his permanent housekeeper, teased the boss.

Mule sat at the table glaring at his thumbs as though if he could ge the boss and girl on them he would fix them both.

His brother talked to the boss that night. The boss said, "You don't have to tell me Elsa's got no home. I'd keep both if I could. The more the merrier. But I'm caught. Her dad and the 3 boys are handle end in trouble in their hardware store in Gun Hill. Those stinking chickendrop farmers there got the storekeepers by the crop if they don't side with them. Maybe, they'll sell out and come down here. There's nothing like the family taking care of the place."

Steve kept cudgeling his brain how to get rid of the girl and slap Elsa's wonderfully easy rich body his way. Finally when the niece went out riding, he loosened the axle nut on the buggy. The wheel slipped off, the girl grabbed the lines and wasn't hurt. He covered the barn floor trapdoor with hay when she went hunting eggs. She fell thru only to be slightly jarred. He slipped some poisonous henbean, used for the cows, into the sandwiches she was taking to the Sunday school picnic. Her lips swelled. Elsa had to lash her hands with towels to the bed during her convulsions.

Right after the niece was taken back to Gun Hill, Steve felt the coast was clear. He offered the boss to pay another cook to help Elsa during harvest.

The boss laughed in his swivel chair, clognosed. "You talk like you was ready to marry her."

"I been thinking," stuttered Steve. "We been knocked around till the stitches is flying loose. Maybe we could fix that old milkhouse for us . . ."

The boss sagged as if the bone were all taken out of him. "Don't know what to say. The little girl sick, the cider mill, it's

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got me in a hopper." He looked at Steve with the corner of his eye. "She's a fine piece, that Elsa. A fellow feels these days what's left is curling up in a hole. But Mule's no fool. Hell of a time with Bill, hell of a time with Sarah and Murf. . . . Women take the cake when it comes to stirring clean water muddy."

Steve scratched his head. He went to the old man. The old man said: "Sure, it ain't a bad idee, the boss acting sometimes like we'll be with him all the days of his life, sometimes like he got no more use for us than a boarhog for tits. But about women, they got two mouths, and you got to be careful to see if both mouths talks together. I'm an old geezer, an old orphan boy, and we three got to stick together. . . . " And again old Murf turned to politics to explain it all. "If we voted maybe for LaFolly, Farmer Labor man, we wouldn't agot this Hoover is my shepherd, he leadeth me past souphouses. If no Hoover, no Roosevelt with a great hog reducing plan that's filled the country with more hogs. This LaFolly wore no man's collar, was going to make excursion boats out of battleships. . . ."

Steve went to Mule. He thought he could handle his brother, softhearted at the bottom, still wearing a faded armband like a recruiting sergeant for the mother dead 15 years. He explained that the three of them could tell the boss go bull himself, could rent a farm or even only a house and work the country round. They would be able to get young Slim out and take care of him.

Mule snorted.

"Murf says the boss acts like he'll throw us off, old mitts. We take Elsa—."

"Elsa?"

"I got a halfhitch on her already."

"Hell, you drunk."

Steve shoved his rammy fist underneath the jack of a nose, and backed away.

Mule hawed again. He had never been drunk in his life. Drink,, no matter how strong, seemed to have all its fire sapped out on its way down the long gut. He stuck his head into the tractor. "Go dibble yourself in the engine. Them oil holes is dry."

Steve went out and wandered around in the barnyard. So he would have to wait until after harvest. A hen fought a mole in the grass. He caught the mole by the tail. It was a fat

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she. He drove a twig thru her tail and flung her to the hen. He hadn't gotten drunk in months because of Elsa. He filled a jug stealthily. He lay in the grass with his cider.

But after harvest, it was no easier. Let him succeed in his stocking feet to steal up to her room and the door was locked or she would start from her sleep. "Oh Steve, please, I can get along." And the only time he could look at her was when the others were around.

The old man with his toad, bottle, newspapers. Mule on the saddle of the horserake grown into the ash tree. Elsa squatting softly, her hands in the trough of her lap.

Murf saying, "The boss can blow the best man off this place easy as snot. Why cuss a woman for carrying a jobless fellow on her neck like a horsecollar? Yesterday I was down with the milk I see a freight and homeless men on it like a cattlecar. Now Ed Greener, he's school trustee, he's a hawk on history. He says the Revolutionary War, it put us ahead of the world. Sure, but the Revolutionary ain't stopped one half the world bulling the other half."

Elsa wiped her hands on her haunches. "It ain't one half, it ain't even one-fourth, it's the few who got the money."

Murf said sadly, "Yes, the women got to take it, the working man got to."

Elsa held her hands to her face as if to keep her laughter from spilling. "They don't."

Steve lay on the ground so he could see Elsa's thighs naked as flannel plants.

"How you going to stop it? Get together? They got together against the devil. They had Sunday meetings. Much good that did. Now some people talk like if you had a bellyache or a man's disease, for the sake of arguing, have a meeting, get together. Here's these hawbucks from Gun Hill the boss bats about. There's sex trouble, as the papers say, sex short for sexton as dick short for deacon to bury and raise you. Here's a letter they made the paper print."

So Murf read of the Gun Hill farmers in the north county where they milk stumps and hire crows to shell their corn. The letter by the chairman of the Gun Hill branch of the United Farmers League which had won electric lights and put Pie Johnson, electric contractor and rich farmer, into the soup. They were fighting for the immediate release of Al Robertson, facing a 10 years' term in the penitentiary. Johnson had hired Robert-

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son while the old hand was out on probation after having "raped" a 15-year old girl. Johnson had hired him because he could use this probation as a club over the old man's head. The day after the farmers' victory over Johnson the hired man had been framed up on charges of having attacked Johnson's servant girl. The farmers charged that Al was arrested not because of the servant girl but because he had helped them fight Johnson. The farmers charged that Johnson used flycatcher servant girls to keep hired men working for shoestring wages. They pointed out that Johnson, the local bankers, the rich storekeepers were the real criminals because with their mortgages they were choking thousands of farmers off the land, breaking up homes, forcing the women to hit the streets, shutting down schools and paying school teachers with warrants worth less than last years cornshucks. The farmers said that if hired men like Al Robertson had been given land and a chance to have their own homes they would never have blundered for their comfort to know-nothing young girls. The farmers said there would be hunger, diseases, and such problems so long as the farmers were unorganized and did not run the whole shooting match to suit themselves.

Murf guffawed until tears came to his eyes. "There you are. 'Join the Gun Hill United Farmers League'."

Elsa grabbed the paper.

Mule pawed the earth to bury his spittle. "Never heard of farmers fighting to help a hired man."

Murf said. "How in hell can you do it? This guy Johnson is a crablouse. But they're going to be so long as the world is ballocksed up. He'll die like us, and'll be buried a long time, damn him." And he jammed his fist down as if turning a switch.

Elsa muttered, "That makes us sing. He's doing the harm alive."

The boss had come up slowly, leaned against the porch pillar. "It's fellows like me's worse off. Worked since I was hubhigh and made something, and now they're tearing it to pieces. I'm caught in a corner between two stonewalls, capital and labor. The fellows working in the cider mill bleeding me white. They're after the farm too. Got a notice from the feed company feed's gone up $3 a ton, the Blue Eagle jacked up the men's pay. Go to the bank for a loan, and they're dry as apple-drunk cows, had a hell of a time splattering over the whole world. Looks to me we'll have to haul our horns in. Looks to

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me like Murf'll have to cook this winter." He glared at them as if they were all in league against him, flung his head up as if to rip them up the belly, and stalked off.

Steve grunted, "Hell with him. There's jobs."

Elsa had turned white. "It ain't so easy. I—you've got the same job for years." Her husband working in the foundry lost his job. She had to go back to work in the slaughterhouse again linking sausages, coming home with pay checks snipped off always (now they'd take off 5 cents, now a dollar) mice and bugs in her clothing, the strawboss finally getting at the women who were fat. "Fat asses," he called them. In bed that's what they want, but in the factory, no. The women caught between two knives. How she had to starve herself, her German girl friend using rubber pads and drugs. They were fired anyway. Her husband disappeared. She got a waitress job working nights. With the Blue Eagle, the boss charged waitresses for meals, fired her. Then her spunky girl friend and she bought overalls to keep the cold and everything else out and rode the freights. She looked at the men hatefully. In New York they waited around for jobs, once sleeping all night on the pavement to be first in line, once in a subway with newspapers round their faces like chickens with their heads chopped off. Her friend was weak from reducing drugs, couldn't stand it any longer, took sick, and died in the hospital . . .

She dug her fist into her lap. "Who's afraid of work? I —I want to live. Was always going to the movies back home, now ain't been in one so long. It's—." She banged the screen door and ran upstairs.

Mule had his face muzzled with his hands. His brother walked around as if he had a worm in his head.

Old Murf said, "We got to look out for number 1. If it was a factory, say, where a boss is trying to frog a girl clerk or cut her pay, everybody together can kind of slam him against the wall." The old man lay back on the grass as if his last thread had snapped.

Steve went looking for the boss. The boss said quickly, "Movies? I'm using the car, going tonight to a bank meeting. I'll take her along to the town movie, pick her up way back." Steve gawked and walked off, the boss's laugh like a hornet plugged into his ear.

The boss yelled up at her window. He sat in his car blow-

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ing the horn. She limped out dragging her leg, looking away from the men.

Mule sat up in the machine shed reading the Gun Hill newspaper laboriously. His brother had the light on in the bedroom. When the car lurched in, Mule walked out towards the kitchen porch. Elsa flung goodnight over her shoulder to the boss. She moved thru the wet grass slowly. She stopped, her powder smell sweeping over him like a mist. She touched him with her hand. "Mule, Mule, I—." He stiffened back. The boss hurried forward coughing. She slammed the door and walked heavily up to her room.

"Steve's on his ear about the girl," whispered the boss. He offered his foreman a cigar, lit one himself. The light flowed up his face in a grin. "We don't want any trouble, damn it. Soon's the cider mill's finished off and I hear from Gun Hill, we can settle who's to hang on for winter."

Left alone, Mule couldn't thumb out what it was that kept bothering him again. A she all over, soft as rabbit's foot clover one puff, the next hard as bullhorns. Hell, the boss couldn't mean any of the men. He fingered the fat cigar shaped like a barrel spigot and flung it away in disgust. The boss was still in the office, as he climbed to his room.

Next morning Elsa was swollen-faced, said nothing to anybody.

At the end of the week the boss lost the cidermill. The bank wouldn't give him an extension. He burned bushels of bills, rammed around the farm rooting up things with plans to turn the farm into a money mill.

Elsa continued dragging around, dogged and pale, until Murf decided it was the turns she had. When worry and the turns hit a woman at the same time, it's a one-two blow that knocks the devil out of the spunkiest one. The old man had a strong patent medicine with a label showing a sick family kneeling to an angel with outstretched wings like a gander.

Elsa flung out, "Fool, silly old damn fools. That's you men, always running it down to the same things. God, God."

The old man crawled off to the brothers. "Even if it ain't, it won't do no harm to make things easy for her. She jumps on us. That's the way a fellow was brought up, that to be the leaning stick. The boss said before he fires, he'll talk it over. Meantime, help a little. Get her something special to eat. That wild celery down Chesapeale Bay, that's full of iron I read in

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the Agriculturist. Ducks eat them. Ducks fight over their womenfolk, but they ain't got the turns, they ain't got labor troubles." He scratched his burnt neck in confusion.

So the old man helped with the dishes. Steve brought in the wood and brought milk chocolate from the village drug-store.

Mule took his shotgun along to work, said the crows were bad. He felt restless. Monkey wrench and tractor couldn't help him. It was as though the fences built around the farm all these years were shaking, with a strange storm smashing the whole world loose. Geese flew chevroned against the sky. He stood, hand over his eyes as if saluting. Even for a fine rifle, it was a hard shot. He let the old shotgun blaze. And with the flash and kick, he felt none of the thrill when he was a kid gunning, the whole country humming with game. And memory like a retriever dog piled nothing at his feet but the bodies of men and women, torn long ago, muddy with the past.

He began getting up even before the cocks' bugling. He stole out of the room barefooted not to wake the others.

He sat in the fencerow, his shotgun pricked up like a great ear watching the horsepond. The stubble of stars was covered over. A red bandanna hung in the east. Soon you could make out the bullrushes, the gap in the stones, and then two shadows gliding over the water.

He slipped down thru the pasture slowly. A hen's flutter from the pond, the bandanna flowed into a red flag, the rushes shook. Up whirled the ducks. A gun banged with his.

He tore around. It was Steve.

One of the ducks had shot into the woods. The other was tumbling among the rushes. Steve plunged ahead with his horned knife.

Mule was up on him. Steve backed away. "Git the mate in the woods. Git—."

Mule knocked him tail over teakettle. Steve pawed up with his knife. Mule glanced at him sideways and drove him back on his knees into the rushes.

A cow bawled in the barn.

The blood was streaming from Steve's face. He looked as if cleanings were coming out of him. He jerked at his gun. The second barrel plowed the rushes between Mule's legs.

Mule just spat on him. "You evil stinking rumhound." He picked up the little wood duck. He rung its neck. The yellow

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web stiffened. He stroked its breast, "Hellish fat, the little bugger."

He strode towards the kitchen. His brother twitched behind him, trailing the duck's blood.

At the barway Murf. Old Murf holding his belly, dancing on one leg, then the other. He jerked up his hands. The brothers stared at him. He hished. They followed him the back way. Murf choked, coughed, waving his arm. "Went at it like corn." They stopped at the foot of the stairs.

The boss was heaving in Elsa's room.

Murf pushed the brothers out, spluttering and wheezing. "Been after her all the time. Slippery as pigspit, he's always been." He wigwagged his hands. "Jesus Hell Chirst, what a bulling he's giving her, what a bulling he give us all, the boss." He howled with delight and bucked the air.

Mule picked up the little wood duck. His big jaw hung as if it were broken. Murf laughed. He batted it down suddenly on Murf's head. Murf went down like a ball of lead. Steve jumped on him. And the two brothers furiously trampled the howling old man.

Up jerked a window. The boss rammed out his red face.

Murf crawled into the bushes sniffling and spitting.

Mule jerked up the wood duck. But all that was left was a leg and a bloody little piece of ass. He hurled it after Murf into the bushes.

The swollen cows were bawling to be milked.

Mule and Steve stumbled down to the barn.

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THE FRONT

who thrust his fist into cities
arriving by many ways
watching the pavements, the factory yards,
the cops on beat

walked out on the platform
raised his right arm, showing the fist clenched
"comrades, I bring news"

came back then skies and silhouettes,
facing the bay, of sailors
who no longer take the sea
because of strikes, pay-cuts and class-unity

"comrades, I bring news"

of the resistance of farmers
in Oneida county on a road
near a small white cottage
looking like a Xmas card,
4 shot, the road was blocked
glass to blow their tires

there was one guy we grabbed
some bastard of a business man
learning to play State Trooper
one of the boys tackled him neat as he ran

Behold my American images get it straight
a montage of old residences bridges shops freights
Xmas, the millions walking up and down
the tables where applications are received
the arguments that will yet get down to something

in the center of this a union-hall
and on the platform he
with right arm crooked, fist clenched
"comrades, I bring news"

HAROLD ROSENBERG

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I MEET SCOTLAND YARD

Nathan Adler

IF THEY HADN'T ASSASSINATED Alexander of Yugoslavia and Premier Barthou that festive day in Marseille; if the Duke of Kent hadn't decided to marry the Princess Marina in mid-November, I might be taking tea today in London and shaking hands with Picadilly or whatever it is every good American does in England if he doesn't fly to Paris. Perhaps I'm wrong; perhaps Scotland Yard had other reasons for deporting me. It's likely, though, that the wireless story in the *New York Times* is true. The bullets of that embittered Croatian ricocheted and affected a young New Yorker setting out to discover the world anew and making a literary pilgrimage to England.

For a long time I have wanted to write a book about D. H. Lawrence. I think of him as a man who lost his class; who, in the struggle between his mother and father, transcended the Freudian implications of the personal conflict and was forced to choose between the class goals that his parents represented. In doing so he anticipated by at least ten years some of the main currents of fascist consciousness. Towards the end I think he recognized his mistake.

When I received an assignment to cover the British Film Industry for a New York trade paper, I jumped at the chance. I felt it would give me an opportunity to learn the English background I wanted so much to know. I thought also of those English young men, many of whom have not yet passed their twenty-fifth birthday, who are becoming the musclemen and thugs for the Mosley fascists. I wanted to meet these young men. I have known my fellow twenty-four year olds along Sixth Avenue and in the coffee pots, in New York; jobless, hoping something will happen, saying something must happen, they don't care what,—even war, so long as it happens, so long as it is different, so long as it isn't the terrifying paralysis that is now destroying them.

Like many another person setting out to a foreign country I fortified myself with letters of introduction. To a prominent literary agent from a New York publisher, to a respectable and not too significant novelist, to the son of a British Lord, a leading movie critic in London, to John Strachey, to the editors of *Left Review*, a Marxist literary magazine. I also carried a letter to Sergei Eisenstein in Moscow, where I planned to stop. These letters were to brand me as a dangerous conspirator, and,

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force my deportation from tight little Albion, so that the Duke of Kent could be married in thirteen unhindered minutes.

All the way across we sailed under a hot sun over a sea placid as a mill pond. It was so easy to look out to the scalloped rim at the horizon and imagine that it was a line of low lying hills. The modern steamer insulates the passenger, encompasses him with the security and luxury of a modern hotel, prevents his coming face to face with the world outside. From Ambrose Light clear across to the Cornish coast the gulls and sea swallows followed the ship; and there was nothing new. I had known all this, known more; learned it all in the movies since childhood. Even an airplane could give me nothing really new.

Finally we passed Bishop's Light, sticking out like a sore thumb above the Scilly Islands, and we were in England. That last night, steaming up the South coast, most of the English passengers got drunk; they seemed to be wanting to run away, displeased at seeing England again. As soon as it was light enough to see I dressed and came out on deck. I wanted to see the chalk cliffs at Dover, see the port where the English soldiers had embarked, that Germans had sown with mines. Twenty six miles across the Channel was France and beyond that stretched the continent. I seemed to sense it all, the Romans, the conquering Normans, and then twenty years ago the hundred of thousands of young English men who had crossed the Channel to muck, terror and death. The wind came down from the North Sea and all Europe's history seemed to swirl about my head. The ghosts of a thousand years swept over the water. I was alone on deck. Later some Americans came up to join me. The English slept soundly below. They seemed not too eager about returning home.

After ten days of sea and sky, though the sea is calm, one looks with wondrous newborn eyes again on the life men have made for themselves. As the ship moved cautiously up the Thames to London I stayed on deck and watched the barges go by. The English passengers were still drinking at the bar. The barges were small little tubs with large russet brown sails, cosy and warm. There were other barges more like the ones we see on American rivers. There was always a man walking across the stern, pushing the arm of a long thin oar before him. There, on both sides of the river, was the land I had come three thousand miles to see. A man can become so deluded by names; one has only to say "Thames," and the years, the images, and the desires telescope into a sharp longing pain. Actually the Thames shore under London is a lot like the Jersey swamplands, a sordid and depressing industrial landscape.

We entered the locks that were to lift us to the basin where the ship docked. Across a bridge, a red bus rolled by. There was a large

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placard over the top of it, *Schweppes Soda Water*. I was in England. The names remembered and the places.

As we were towed through the locks to the pier, the customs and immigration men came on board. The ship had been freshly painted and the immigration man got some of the wet paint on his gloves. He swore and muttered under his breath. He didn't forget those paint stained gloves all afternoon. I went to my cabin and opened my baggage. It was one of those formal examinations and it was soon over. I had passed the customs. I went back to the salon to see the Immigration man. On the way I passed one of the English women. She was in a rage. "Oh, the bahstards! They're so damnably rude."

While I waited with the other Americans for the English citizens to get their landing permits, I was uneasy. The card I held read "Aliens Entry Permit" and the associations that have been pounded into our heads here in America in relation to the word, alien, made me feel self-conscious as a man standing under klieg lights.

The turn of the Americans came. One by one they were subjected to a painstaking and thorough examination. A natty young man from Scotland Yard, so unlike the heavy, red-necked bulls of New York, sat beside the immigration man. He kept looking through a little red book as each new passenger came forward for the interview. That book, a steward told me, was Scotland Yard's blacklist, and held the names of all "fugitives from justice." No immigration man could clear passengers, the steward said, unless a Scotland Yard man was present and passed on them.

When my turn came I showed the immigration man my credentials from the New York motion picture trade paper.

"Have you any other letters"? the immigration man asked.

"I've no other letters," I said. "I'm travelling on assignment from my paper. British films have been attracting attention in the American market and I have been asked to write a survey."

"So you've come here to spy on our films"! bellowed the young man from Scotland Yard. Why was he trying to provoke me?

"Not quite," I said. "Twickenham and Shepherds Bush still import their artists and technicians from Hollywood to show them how to make films."

"Bring in your baggage," the Immigration man said. What could they have on me, I wondered. I couldn't possibly be on the blacklist. I dragged in my trunk. Among my books they found some typewritten manuscripts and the letters.

"I thought this was the only letter you had," said Scotland Yard.

"These are personal papers, letters to friends of mine. They have

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nothing to do with the film work which has brought me to England."

Scotty picked up a letter. It was addressed to *Left Review* at a Charing Cross bookshop that sold revolutionary literature.

"Are you a member of the I.W.W.?", asked Young Lochinvar.

"No. That letter says I am a member of the John Reed Club. It is an organization of writers and artists opposed to fascism and war. All the other letters say I am a writer."

They went through my trunk. They made me bring in my valise and combed through that. The immigration man gave me a slip of paper, an official notice denying me the right to land. The reason given was Section 13a. The Scotland Yard fellow gathered up my manuscripts and letters and put them in his portfolio.

"You've no right to take those papers," I said.

"They are in the custody of the police."

"This is an American ship, you have no authority here."

"They are in the custody of the police," he answered.

"I demand an itemized receipt," I said. But he didn't answer. He closed his portfolio, instructed an officer that I was not to leave the ship, and I was left alone in the deserted salon.

I went out on deck. Fog had crept in from the Channel during the hour I was below with the Immigration and Scotland Yard men. It was yellow and heavy, one almost had to push it aside to walk. The sky was low, mottled and swollen like an abscess. England had welcomed me. I walked intently around the deck till I was tired. I could see nothing but the heavy fog rolling past. I went below, stretched out on my bunk, and counted the rivets in the ceiling.

Later when I tried to go out again there was a member of the crew standing watch at my door. He was ashamed and apologetic but the orders were that I was not to leave my cabin till further notice. I asked to see an officer and when he came he promised to phone a friend of mine and to bring me newspapers. When he brought the papers he said my friend sent his greetings, that he would come as soon as he could, and that he was going to get a lawyer on the case.

I felt a lot better. Here I was in a foreign country yet I couldn't ever be completely alone. There would always be comrades in arms, and the kinship would be there, though we had never met.

I settled down to wait. In the newspapers I could see that the English were creating their modern mythology in the Duke of Kent-Princess Marina wedding. They were giving the English people the equivalent of the Lindbergh saga. Heroes and circuses. And the circuses were necessary. In Wales, and in the North of England, according to the papers, unemployment was increasing. It was doubtful whether thou-

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sands of these people would ever be reabsorbed into industry. In Plymouth, six young men, all under twenty-five, had been arrested for breaking up a street meeting. They were Mosleyites and they had worn brass knuckles and their hands had been taped.

For two days I kept reading the papers and waiting for evening so that there would be more papers to read. I wanted to write but I was afraid the Scotland Yard man might return and seize what I had written. The thick yellow fog blotted out the light from my porthole. The newspapers said it was the worst fog London had known in ten years, all traffic was at a standstill, there were many accidents. Every four hours the watch at my door was changed.

Finally my friend came; he apologized that he had not come sooner. He said it was because of the fog. He had gotten in touch with the *Manchester Guardian,* with a Labor Member of Parliament, with a leading and influential attorney who had been prominent in the Reichstag trial. They had gone to the Home Office in my behalf where they had been told that there was no political discrimination; I was being kept out because of lack of funds. My friend had brought his British passport and his bankbook with him. He wanted to show the Immigration officials that he could be responsible for me. "But how does it happen," he asked, "that you came without money?"

"But I have money," I said. And I drew sixty-three pounds from my wallet. "Over three hundred dollars, certainly enough for three months. And I can get more."

"Barbusse arrived by boat, yesterday, from the Soviet Writers Congress," he said.. "He wanted to stop in London for a few days but they made him go right on to Paris. Others have been locked up. It's because of the royal wedding. But we shall get you off. You will stop in London. I'll get all the newspapers down on this," he said.

"If I can't land, please try to get me permission to see the Soviet Consulate. I'd like to get a visa for Russia."

My friend promised, but he insisted there was no reason to keep me, and he would get me ashore; I wouldn't go on to Russia, I'd stop in England first. When he left he told me to be careful in any letters I might write. Their mail was opened frequently and their telephones were consistently interfered with. The other day, when he tried to communicate with the lawyers and newspapers in my behalf there had been interference on his phone for over three hours. It was a common occurrence, he said. At least, I thought as my friend left, England isn't as clumsy as Germany in these matters. Telephones and mails tampered with, but the official reason is "lack of funds"; Brother Jonathan can still stand before the world, holding the Magna Charta in his right hand.

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That afternoon one of the ship's officers informed me I could receive no more visitors unless they had a pass. "Instructions," he said. Every hour a Bobby poked his head into my cabin to see if I was there. He didn't like the job, he was ashamed and tried to laugh it off. "You've never been so well looked after in all your life," he said.

On the fifth day the immigration man came and brought back most of the letters and papers. Though he denied it, there were some he didn't return. He boasted that he knew of every visitor I had had, knew all about them. He knew the contents of all telegrams and cables and letters I had sent. He said I couldn't go on to Russia. I would have to return to the States with the ship that afternoon.

"You have honored me very much," I said.

"You should be ashamed," he answered.

"No, the shame is yours. You've really made something important out of this case, when it is actually trivial. You've behaved hysterically. You took a man of Barbusse's reknown and expelled him from England. It's your shame. Barbusse is an eminent artist and England won't soon blot out this act."

"How did you know about Barbusse," he asked.

"Isn't it true?"

He mumbled something about doing his duty, about all of this being out of his hands, the ruling of the Home Office. Then he shook my hand, said good-bye, charmingly, and left.

In an hour passengers came aboard the ship. The ship cast loose, the purser returned my American passport to me and I was permitted to leave my cabin. The fog had finally lifted but I stayed below. I didn't go on deck to see the Thames shore as we moved down the river. I kept thinking of that English newspaper I had read while I was confined to the cabin.

I thought of those young Mosley thugs, all under twenty-five, who were sentenced to six months hard labor at Plymouth. I was not sorry for them. But I could understand what had driven these young men into the fascist armies of death. I had wanted to meet these legions in Europe and write about them so that we in America would understand them better. As a twenty-four year old who has been out of work for over two years, I think I can understand the hold the Mosleys and Hitlers have over these young men.

On the trip home the Americans did most of the drinking. Why do people dread "home"? Finally, we were towed up the Hudson River. The tug turned the ship towards the dock. My friends were there, cheering. It seemed only a moment ago that the boat had reached mid river, now we were turning back. Everything else seemed so unreal.

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"What's the matter," a friend shouted. "Did you forget something?"

"I forgot my umbrella," I called back.

On the dock they showed me some newspaper clippings. The *Boston Herald* wrote "They found a letter addressed to David Herbert Lawrence, whose writings and paintings have attracted the attention of the London police." I knew I was back in America! A wireless story to the *New York Times* concluded, "Apparently he was one of many who were turned back as "undesirable aliens" in the fortnight preceding the royal wedding."

I thought of the dream I had had, the England of the novels and history books I had come to see. Suddenly I realized how futile had been this pilgrimage to yesterday. Yesterday was dead; it was a myth. There was no returning. Today's headlines about the India Bill and armaments and the shard of a civilization in Wales and the North country, that was real, that was England. A country knowing that death was certain, placing young men at all ports and all terminals glancing furtively at a little red book hidden under the table, that was the image, the end of a thousand years.

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BOOKS

A SIGNIFICANT REVOLUTIONARY NOVEL

THE EXECUTIONER WAITS, *by Josephine Herbst. Harcourt, Brace.* $2.50.

The title of Miss Herbst's latest novel means, I take it, that the executioner waits for the great middle class. So many Americans belong to this class by descent and by income that the implications of this book make it one of the most absorbing novels of the season. It is a more faithful reproduction of our actual experiences during the years of depression than Sinclair Lewis was for the years of prosperity, since it is free from the distortion both of satire and of conscious propaganda. It pictures the progress of impoverishment in the way in which it is coming to most of us, so gradually that we are loath to admit it. Our incomes are periodically reduced. The rents from our little properties are so uncertain as to leave scant profit after increasing taxes are paid. We find it harder to get new jobs at the same time that we contribute to the support of a larger number of relatives, most of whom are neither aged nor infirm. The adage to be thrifty, to labor incessantly and thus guarantee the reward of a tranquil old age; the old adages no longer work. At this point we visit our really prosperous relatives, only to find them repeating the advice and keeping their incomes to themselves. We become conscious that class distinctions are gradually and with a cruelty that is often unrecognized supplanting the ties of blood once believed so sacred and now generally functioning in proportion to mutual poverty. *The Executioner Waits* is the most damaging criticism yet published in the form of fiction of the theory of capitalistic individualism as applied to the petty bourgeoisie.

But the value of the book is not simply that these sociological reflections are embedded in it. It is rather that they are embedded in it after the manner appropriate to fiction as an esthetic medium. Nowhere, to my recollection, are these statements actually made in the book, but they lie behind the action of the novel and give form to its accumulation. Miss Herbst is writing of the family of Anne Wendell and of those of her brothers and sisters, her brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, and her cousins and her aunts. It would be impossible for her within the limits of a single volume to philosophize successfully about the activities of so many people. Where philosophy intrudes, it is in the conversation of her characters. For she knows better than most novelists that people do "talk philosophy," and better than most propagandists that when they do, it is normally a generalization of their own experiences with the aid of whatever formal philosophy in the air at the moment seems to explain them. She has doubtless been led to this insight by another shrewd observation from life: that persons without the leisure of the wealthy actually do find other matters vital besides sex and recreation and culture. Mr. Galsworthy rarely

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brought business into his *Forsythe Saga,* and Henry James thought it positively beneath the attention of the novelist. When novelists of the middle class have done so, it has been usually, as in Balzac, Dickens, and Lewis, in the spirit of satire, which is of course the spirit in which the aristocratic view-point would regard it once it decided to regard it at all. Miss Herbst, on the contrary, weaves it into her book precisely as it is woven into the family life of our petty bourgeoisie, where it is as real and necessary an interest as finding a mate, and tremendously more real and necessary than gossiping about the neighbors or discussing the latest women's club lecture. And yet no two of her families have quite the same problems or quite the same outlook upon them. It is true that a direct dialectic opposition becomes apparent to the reader through the natural grouping of these families according to generation. But it is not a simple dichotomy. The older group holds to the theory of capitalistic individualism. And those of the older generation who have not followed it are the least prosperous and respected. But, on the other hand, those of the younger generation who command our respect are those who are conscious of the present inadequacy of the system, out of whose own problem of survival is arising a social attitude and explanation. Whereas the younger characters who still adhere to the theory of the older are no more successful, no more happy, and much more shrivelled and crabbed in personality than their contemporaries who do not. But here again the contrast is an inference of the reader since Miss Herbst leaves us amid the rich plenty of incident and individual characterization.

In previous novels, Miss Herbst has had the same interest in practical life and has employed the same technique. But she has never before displayed them so adequately; for she has not, let us say, in *Pity Is Not Enough,* applied them to a material with which she has been sufficiently acquainted. *Pity Is Not Enough* deals with the youth of Anne Wendell and especially with the career of her brother who became involved in Reconstruction politics in the South. Since she does not, in fact, cannot know, intimately the particular circumstances of life at this now remote period, and sees the personalities of the era only through the eyes of history and family legend, because of the very nature of her method, this earlier novel failed to become realized. In place of detail in human personality, she gave, as Dreiser did in *An American Tragedy,* detail observed from the newspapers or other documents. But with her economy in the use of detail, as far as any individual character out of the many on her canvas is concerned, her objective method, when applied to history, became a failure. If it is to her credit as an artist that she has nevertheless insisted upon the method natural to her talent, it is to the credit of her insight that in this later novel she has brought to it the contemporary material in which alone it can properly function. The artifice and superficiality which, despite her intention, are present in *Pity Is Not Enough* have now given way, and in *The Executioner Waits,* Miss Herbst has developed into one of our most significant novelists.

EDWIN BERRY BURGUM

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NARCISSUS

THE DARING YOUNG MAN ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE, *by William Saroyan. New York: Random House.* $2.50.

Just because Saroyan has been writing silly letters to the magazines is no reason for discounting him as a total loss. First the common run of reviewers lost their heads and then the boys with the higher standards tried to laugh him out of court, and they almost succeeded. They pierced through the ballyhoo and pointed to his very definite shortcomings, his adolescent struttings, etc.; yet I feel that the man illustrates a literary trend or symptom of social importance. And this, rather than the efforts of press-agents or the rakish angle of his hat, explains the languishments whose blatancy so offended the adverse commentators. Except in a certain sense, both the response to him and what he says are not fads but articulations of concrete history. Hence it might prove worth while to examine his work in detail. Esthetics may be the under-sea level of ideology, but that's where you find the pearls.

From the viewpoint of sheer writing Saroyan's performance deserves little praise. He overstates what he says and he says it the same way at the beginning, the middle and the end of his stories, self-conciously, with the romanticism of an uncalled-for defiance that soon becomes ridiculous. Usually he runs around and around a perception till finally it's as big as life and he can't miss it. Instead of philosophical overtones or implications, he gives us philosophy in the actual texture, line after line. He does not tread the earth; he promenades—a soul-de-luxe in felt slippers.

And yet there are many vivid passages in the book, which prove the writer to possess a very tangible talent. Moreover, since we don't believe 'sheer writing' to be self-determining, it must be in the conception, in the world-feeling that shapes it, that we will find the source which mars his expression. In most of the stories Saroyan is concerned with himself, with his fusion with God and the Universe, with his dark ways as a young man of a dark kind. And these are precisely the stories that most perceptive critics didn't care for. He is more successful where he manages to discard the poetry of ego and eternity in favor of a more objective field of reference. Instances of this are *Laughter, Harry,* and *Aspirin Is A Member of the N.R.A.,* in which he tries to spread himself but the N.R.A.—more real than he—rudely overshadows him. The less there is of Saroyan as a subject (because then the subject ceases to exist and the writing really becomes 'sheer writing') the less he writes "for God" and, ultimately, for *Vanity Fair.*

The dashing title of the book has given people a false sense of the author. Actually he is trembling. Objective life terrifies him—art alone is "everlastingly dependable." Working as a teletype operator he feels that he is being murdered, and only in the fiction room of the public library is he able to identify himself. He hates to think of the world's

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structure and events in it and change and strife; hence he denies its motion, seeking to affirm it as *being* in the Platonic sense, as a virtual stability "out of time": in other words out of history, which is social time. Then certainly it becomes necessary to lift Man (not men) "from the nightmare of history to the calm dream of his own soul." And this calm dream is "language" (not apprehension and expression as affective communication). For a while he is forced to give up writing because of poverty, and at once he "becomes nothing, not even a shadow." The real world presses in on him, and he cannot help feeling that "it is blasphemous for any living man" to live thus and that "he has less honor than a grocer's clerk, less dignity than the doorman at the St. Francis hotel, less identity than the driver of a taxi-cab." Here is the vision of shame in the face of the worker's labor, which proves its reality by affecting life. But it is merely a passing insight; its impingement on the consciousness is too brief to save him from the seductive mystery of the dream of *stasis*. It is easier, more in the tradition to rejoice in one's cosmic piety and fondle the typewriter thinking: *"This is my room and I have created a small civilization in this room, and this place is the universe to me. . . ."* Life from the Viewpoint of the Short Story! Now we can understand the sources of the prose, which is so prolix, naive and egocentric. Piece by piece a full portrait emerges. Without awareness he writes in one context: "Drama is impossible because everyone is interested in himself." This means that literature is impossible. A sensitive young man leaped into the eternal ether and was smothered.

I have seldom read a more self-revealing exposition of the life of the declassed intellectual, who, being an artist, finds in his very medium a haven from activity. The result is language without perception. He desires "evil," but all he finds is "filthiness"; he wants to give purity, but all he gives is the sentimentality of the "vastest ego." In the title-story he suffers starvation, he makes the rounds looking for work: but the resolution comes when he faints away into infinity. Rejecting on one side the brutishness and sycophancy of commerce, of getting ahead in the world, and on the other the sober courage of struggle against the prevailing oppression—what is left but consoling oneself with the small explosions of "universal" anarchism. He sees the existing order for what it is, for he comes "upon strange specimens of life, men made frightening by capitalism." Yet he cannot see how this same force makes "strange specimens" out of his own themes. In a letter to the *New Masses* he finds the Communist program the most valid, but that is, after all, a secular matter. As regards his writing, it is predetermined and immutable.

This whole mode, of course, is nothing new in American literature. But now the time is ripe for its stagnation; in Saroyan the whole stream comes to the surface; its peculiar essence has become marketable. In the historical sense the school of esthetes-modernists—from whom Saroyan stems and whose "holy" names he invokes in his little testaments—is philosophically of the same complexion. His masters had the advantage over him in functioning earlier, when the mode had a stronger base because of the absence, in the cultural sphere at least, of its dialectic opponent and conqueror. In the nineteen-twenties Horace Gregory quavered:

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"And if you hear me crying: My god, my god, my god,
down streets and alleys
I am merely trembling (afraid, my god, my god,
to be nothing to fade away,
In grass, in stone.)"

(McAlpin Garfinkel, Poet)

But even then Gregory was half-aware, he turned it off and on, and has now moved away. Saroyan has made this the *leitmotif* of his first book, and the pseudo-intellectuals read him in wonder, for here at last is the mystery of Pound and Jolas and Cummings and Williams wriggling on the ground, in full view. Will he stay?

PHILIP RAHV

EXILES FROM REALITY

THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, *by Franz Werfel. The Viking Press,* $3.00.

TABARAS, A GUEST ON EARTH, *by Joseph Roth. The Viking Press,* $2.50.

There is a sense in which the German writer and the German intellectuals as a group are to be held responsible for the triumph of Hitlerism; theirs is an ineluctable portion of the larger social blame. Prof. Ernst Robert Curtius, representative of an older Humanist tradition, in his *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr,* published on the eve of Hitler's accession, has spoken of a "cultural breakdown" and a "culture hatred"; but the humanist's own muddled thinking is evinced by his dread of *"Soziologismus,"* his stress on the Jew's "sub-Marxist" tendencies and "national unassimilability," etc. The end of Stefan George and his "singing youth" movement, dating as far back as 1910, was the manifestations centering about *"die Tat."* The end of the *"neue Sachlichkeit"* in literature is Herr Paul Fechter, the editor of *Deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart,* the representative anthology of modern German poetry, published some years ago, who a few months back made the startling discovery that Goethe was Hitler's John the Baptist!

Nor are the slates of the "exiles" by any means clean. When we read Klaus Mann's *Kind dieser Zeit,* we get a picture of the intellectual weakness in which the generation that came to adolescence during the War was permitted to grow up,—a posturing decadence a la Cocteau and *les Enfants Terribles.* For Germany was the home of Expressionism, the Teutonic correspondent of Cubism, a highly subjective individualism in art that attained its slithering depths in the murky mysticisms of a Kandinsky. As for the outstanding non-Marxist exiles of today, Johannes Becher, in his address to the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, has subjected them—such writers as Heinrich Mann and Lion Feuchtwanger

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—to a kindly but unsparing criticism. Willy Haas, exiled editor of *Die Literarische Welt,* may speak of Prussian Germany's having a "tradition of exile" for her intellectuals; but in the present instance, the German intellectual, if he is honest, must surely find cause for an examination of conscience. Ever since Nietzsche, his thinking has tended to become more muddy, false and hollowly romantic. The result is the embodiment of all this, in the "ideology" of Hitlerism.

Of the two novels here considered, the one is by a German exile who resides in Paris and publishes in Amsterdam, the other by a writer who, born in Prague of Jewish parentage, received his education in Germany and fought for her during the War, but who after the Armistice took up his residence in Vienna, and whose works are now in disrepute in Mr. Hitler's dominions. Both books, it may be stated, exhibit the same vice that distinguishes the unspeakable literature of pathos and bathos now coming out of fascistic Germany, namely, that of a romantic distortion of reality. Herr Roth was one of those younger men who, before Hitler came in, led the attack on Fechter's "new objectivity," an attempted literary version of the Husserl philosophy. He, with Rudolph Kayser, Alfred Döblin and others, rose to protest at once against a reportage disguised as literature and (the description is Fechter's) "that highly personal reality achieved by certain individuals who look out upon the world through the lens of their own egos"; they spoke up in favor of a *"neue Herzlichkeit,"* or new sentimentalism, and Roth gave us his *Job, the Story of a Simple Man.* As for the author of *Class Reunion,* he had started out as a dramatic Expressionist (in his *Spiegelmensch,* of 1920), but would appear to have thrown it off fairly well in the course of three or four years (cf. his *Juarez and Maximilian* of 1924), in favor of a vague all-embracing humanitarianism that is not unreminiscent of French Unanimism. Distinct traces of the Expressionist influence nevertheless remain in his work, in the form of a romantic distortion and an animating romantic spirit. From all of which it may be seen that both writers have decided tares in their past, which are ever threatening to trip them up with their clinging tendrils. As to how far either of them escapes, is a question. The "new objectivity," the "new sentimentalism," Expressionism, an imported Unanimism—the case-histories of most contemporary German writers are not promising ones.

One of the sharpest notes the ear catches is that of evasion, evasion in choice of subject as in the thought behind the handling of the subject, the same evasion (geographic and temporal displacement of scene, etc.) that is to be met with in the sorry product turned out by Hitler's writing henchmen. Until one feels like rising up and shouting, if they mean Hitler—and we know they do—then why in Hell don't they say so, as any exponent of socialist realism would do? But they don't. Instead, the exiled Herr Roth must compose a blood-and-thunder "legend," in the tradition of that "myth-making" which Mussolini's Novecentisti are always talking about. A hero who is something like M. Céline's Bardamu turned petty Hitler, which is a thing, incidentally, that Bardamu might readily become. This semi-conscious personage, Russian by birth and an émigré to America, is led on by a Coney Island gypsy to return to Europe and the World War and to wade through diminutive oceans of blood, in order

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to fulfill her prophecy that he would become first a murderer and then a saint; and after tearing out an old Jew's beard following a pogrom, he does become a pious-yearning beggar and dies what is presumably intended to be an edifying death, thus bringing the "legend" to a close.

Herr Werfel, for his part, has provided the Book of the Month Club with an ideal Xmas trade volume of more than 800 pages, with all the impressive accoutrements in the way of maps, glossaries, etc. And into those 800 plus pages he has packed plenty of excitement, romance, adventure, along with several bits and passages that would do credit to a William Seabrook. It is true, he has chosen a big theme, the attempted annihilation, in the guise of transplantation, of the entire Armenian people by the Turks under cover of the War, and the heroic stand made by a handful of Armenians on the summit of Musa Dagh. It is a theme out of which a master of socialist realism would have shaped a masterpiece for all time. As it is, Herr Werfel has produced—an excellent Book of the Month Club selection. If this is so, it is due to the fact that he has not had the courage to let realism suffice, but must introduce stale old romantic love-elements and similar trappings, pages of the merely picturesque, whimsical and humorous touches that are out of key, etc.; but most of all, it is due to the false thinking behind the book, the kind of thinking that might be expected of one who "conceives tragedy as the basis of life"—which is not, after all, at such a far remove from the "eschatological pathos" of a Gottfried Benn. The suicidal murder of the hero at the end, after he has saved the remnants of the colony, utterly unmotivated as it is save by a false romanticism, is a good index to the character of the novel.

Franz Werfel's thinking, so nearly as one can make it out, is to the effect that, while a bad nationalism is bad, the nation in itself is a good and even a divine thing, and that while a racialism that results in the bloody oppression of minorities is to be deplored, yet blood (race) is after all thicker than water, as in the case of Gabriel Bagradian, the Paris-bred, and his half-French, half-American son. (There is likewise a certain tacit racial chauvinism in the author's attitude toward Juliette, Bagradian's French wife). If the Armenians were massacred, it was on account of the Young Turk of the Enver Pasha brand, who is the product of Europe's interference with the slumbrous "spirituality" of the old Mohammedan East, through the introduction of modern improvements, commerce and the like.

All this, it may be repeated, is simply heaping confusion upon confusion. And it all helps to explain how Hitlerism happened. There is no faintest hint of underlying social causes behind the phenomena of rampant nationalisms and radicalisms,—nothing, in short, to disturb the Book of the Month Club reader, who was doubtless pro-Ally during the War, as he revels in this tale of the Terrible Turk's atrocity (the anti-Hitlerian writer seems to have, often, an almost Hitlerian fondness for blood), without suspecting or caring to suspect the presence of not dissimilar if better concealed horrors at home, for which he himself has his share of social responsibility.

SAMUEL PUTNAM

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THE DEPRESSION GENERATION

YOU CAN'T SLEEP HERE, *by Edward Newhouse. Macaulay.* $2.00.

This is the first novel by a member of what might be called the "depression" generation—as distinguished from the preceding "speakeasy" generation, whose autobiography has been recorded in *Exile's Return.* The difference between these two groups is traced in the only "philosophical" passage which adorns *You Can't Sleep Here*:

> "I had not been accustomed to consider myself part of a generation, so-called, but staying in Central Park and in the libraries and passing street corners in Manhattan, how could I escape it?
>
> "This was not a lost generation. These young people had never found themselves. . . .
>
> "I had not consorted with my generation. Usually there were ten to fifteen years' differences between my friends and me. My friends had been the lost generation, and I did not completely understand them because their limitations were not my limitations. . . .
>
> "I was the crisis generation who had never been absorbed into industry or the professions. . . . We had all the old problems. . . . But we had also something new, the passing of economic security. We college and high school and public school graduates were certain of our economic future. The pile of lumber and cement under the billboards [to be used for building a shack in a Hooverville] was Connie's immediate economic future and mine. The public comfort station down the block and leftover buns at the automat and hourly supervision by twirling bats were our certainties."

Such a passage tempts the critic to regard this novel as a testament of the newest literary generation, as a sort of inverted *This Side of Paradise* of the early nineteen-thirties. However, there is little else in the book which would relate it in the same way to its generation as, say, *Mooncalf* is identified with the literary radicals of two generations before.

As a matter of fact, the passage is altogether misleading, for the novel does not record moods and reactions typical of the new literary generation, or of any other sector of American youth.

The reasons for this are not very difficult to discover. In the first place, Newhouse has not set out to write a book which encompasses the range of experience one is accustomed to find in a "social" novel like *Pere Goriot* or *The Shadow Before.* Indeed, *You Can't Sleep Here* is hardly a novel in the traditional literary sense. It is limited to a slight, racy story, which skips through a brief period of time and a single series of events. Moreover, these experiences are new and unfamiliar to the

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protagonist and he is thrust abruptly into them; and he doesn't stay in them very long before the book ends! Thus there is little opportunity for the development of character, and little chance to dig into the problems familiar to revolutionary youth today. The book is done in the technique of a Hollywood talkie or a drugstore novelette—although, of course, it is decidedly different from such confections by virtue of its fresh writing and realistic handling of material.

Even the events which make up the story of *You Can't Sleep Here* do not seem to be typical of the experiences of the "depression" generation. The book does not possess that quality which classical literary criticism called the "universal" but which we more accurately term the "social." The scenes of the novel and the attitude of the characters do not make the reader say: "Here are experiences characteristic of a certain type of white-collar worker in the depression," or "Here are the typical moods and feelings of revolutionary youth today." It is impossible to consider *You Can't Sleep Here* in the same way one thinks of *To Make My Bread* as a social document describing the evolution of the Southern peasant into an industrial proletariat or to find in Newhouse's novel the mood and material which enables a poem like Alfred Hayes' *In A Coffee Pot* to catch the typical reactions of unemployed white collar workers in the great economic crisis.

Certainly this is not due to the social reality of the events themselves: the contents of *You Can't Sleep Here* center around like in a Hooverville, and include a flophouse scene, a strike, a demonstration. Nor is it the result of an unrealistic description of these scenes; as a whole, they develop naturally in the plot of the novel.

Then what is it due to? I believe it must be attributed largely to the intensely *personal* perception of the author. To be sure, it is this individualized way of looking at things which is responsible for the fresh writing and delightful gags and mannerisms to be found in the book. This breezy sensibility of Newhouse is an adaptation of the hardboiled manner of the speakeasy generation (with whom he tells us his hero "consorted" but did not "completely understand" because their "limitations" were not his and he did not have to "go through their extremes"), plus the sense of social awareness which has come to members of all extant literary generations during the past three or four years. The result is something more than a combination (conceive it if you can!) of Ernest Hemingway, Ring Lardner, and John Spivak! But it is this peculiar outlook which makes Newhouse *look for* light and striking things even in social scenes whose description demands something like deep earnestness and a sense of the tragic.

His mode of perception is, therefore, definitely limited when he approaches such material. It is, I think, far better adapted to satiric *exposes* of upper-class practises than to profound stories of workingclass struggles. While *You Can't Sleep Here* is full of fresh, clean writing which could never be dull and ordinary, it fails exactly where the plodding and unliterary manner of *To Mtke My Bread* succeeds.

ALAN CALMER

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OLD HORIZON

HORIZONS OF DEATH, *by Norman Macleod. Parnassus Press, New York.* $1.75.

An important book of verse is rarely chamber music; usually it integrates fragments of the poet's experience into a legend with a starting point and a destination. *Horizons of Death* is divided into four sections which trace an emotional and intellectual journey from the brilliant landscapes of Macleod's Southwest through the industrial jungles of the city; but it stops short of a destination, and there is no hint of any future but death. This is the great disappointment in this eagerly expected first volume by one of America's most gifted and prolific writers.

Perhaps Macleod merely selected forty-five pieces from his hundreds of poems to justify a strange title, but I am moved to wonder if the reasons for his choice do not amount to an abandonment of his position close to the revolution. The rigid demands of unity in *Horizons of Death* required omission of many poems, of course; yet the addition of a fifth section to the book could have included *Cotton Pickers In Alabama, Purgatory For The Rich* and *Coal Strike,* revolutionary poems which are among his best work.

The first two sections deal with the poet's background, his native New Mexico. In glittering words and startling, multicolored phrases, Macleod interprets the color and ritual of his Southwest, the slow rhythm of his lines giving mystical feeling to the calm and agelessness of the deserts and hills. His images are clear and direct, he captures the moods of these scenes well, the nobility and vastness of the desert, the black hills and turquoise skies.

But nobility and silence do not evoke images of life to Macleod; it calls forth dreams of death. Constantly he speaks of *"the sadness* of *dying: the death of all love."*—

"And the hills are dead and will not rise again:
And the wind is the sorrow of death."

From the warm peace of New Mexican hills the poet is driven among the steel and stone canyons of an industrial city, and becomes terror-stricken by the uncertainty and complexity of his new existence. Life is hardly bearable; for *"there was no peace in the heavens . . . not even a bluebird can venture forth without fear of being electrocuted."* The desire for death becomes an obsession, a constantly recurring refrain, and the book ends on the motif suggested by the title.

Thus we see that Macleod has not gone far enough in his journey toward that satisfying totality, the revolutionary position, which alone can make life worth while. Despite an occasional outburst of rebellion his poetry voices aspirations of a confused and alarmed middle class looking for an escape from today. Indeed the entire third section is a prayer to *"Those days of our hardihood: We were strnog with silence. I wish we could go back beyond the years."* The desire to submerge himself, to

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resign from responsible action, is too strong for this poet haunted by nostalgia for desert and prairie, for the imagined simplicity of mountain life. Alone and confused in the bewildering labyrinth of times that have grown beyond him, he regrets the missing scenes of his nativity.

For his confusion and terror Macleod blames the frenzied tempo of the "age of machines," and looks to the golden desert of Tajikistan not with the glance of an inspired builder but with defeated eyes of one eager to escape into the silence and security of tribal life. This feeling may be justifiable as a momentary impulse of a poet hemmed in by the feeling of living in a commercial civilization, but it is hardly a healthy content for a book by a young writer who professes adherence to Marxism-Leninism. I fear that Macleod is one fellow traveller who has not as yet packed his baggage.

WILLIAM PILLIN

MAGAZINE REVIEW

INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE, *organ of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers, Nos.* 1-4, 1934. Moscow, U.S.S.R. American Representatives, International Publishers, 381 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.

It is heartening to note that *International Literature* does not seek to define itself from bourgeois magazines by superficial experimentation in literary forms, and that it has dropped for good the trick format which made the reading of the first issues so difficult. Formal distinctions between a revolutionary journal and a bourgeois magazine are not necessary when the difference in content and intention is so great. Most bourgeois literary magazines, however "advanced," do not play a creative rôle in culture. They may encourage or reflect a literary trend, but they remain sectarian and minor, because they are individual ventures, and not the weapon of a dynamic mass group. *International Literature,* on the other hand, does not merely present the end-product, proletarian fiction, but it creates and directs this fiction by functioning as a forum for revolutionary writers, throughout the world, by furnishing, in its critical reportage, articles, letters from writers, autobiographies and chronicles, the soil on which this fiction may nourish itself.

While it is not directly a magazine of polemic between the proletarian and the bourgeois world, there is material on every page to refute the common misconceptions of bourgeois critics. Those who confuse an art of propaganda with the art of falsifying detail and seeing through rose-colored glasses, are referred to the fiction in *International Literature.* They will not find here the pretty-pretty pictures of Soviet life such as they expect from writers who have, in their opinion, abnegated their powers of observation in favor of a political allegiance. These stories reflect all the terror and confusion of a society in upheaval and re-creation. The Soviet writer, like the writer of any period, is committed to a political

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ideal; but he has not yielded his integrity of observation, he writes with a power and freedom and realism such as no longer exists in the work of writers in capitalist countries.

The first issue of 1934 contains a criticism of James Joyce by Mirsky, a revolutionary interpretation of Joyce, but not the facile application of Marxian yardsticks such as our enemies accuse us of making. An article by Kataev, *On the Threshold of Socialism,* takes up the problems of the Soviet writer. It has that warmth of expression and imagery which is present in all the critical writing that comes out of the Soviet Union, and which revolutionary writing in this country still lacks. This warmth, however, is not a mystic quality, peculiar to Soviet writers and inaccessible to us. But it can develop here only with the growth of the revolutionary movement, because the factor that creates it is not so much the writer as the audience. As yet, in this country, the revolutionary critic lacks a major audience, and our writing is, therefore, still too intellectual and formalistic, still lacking in the power of observation.

The article in number 3, by the Russian writer Stork, on *Calverton and his Friends,* is the best-informed unscrambling of the Calverton-Eastman-Trotsky melee to date. In number 4 we find John Strachey's *Fascism and Culture.* Those who did not hear Mr. Strachey's address before the John Reed Club of New York, or who gained an impression of the speech only through the flip and superficial reviews of Mr. Strachey's book in the newspapers and literary supplements, should go to this issue for the original sources. One may not agree with all of Mr. Strachey's evaluation of bourgeois writers and proletarian writers; but the analysis of the relation between fascism and culture is a lucid and basic statement.

Much criticism has been launched against *International Literature* for its Soviet orientation, and the preponderance of Soviet fiction and criticism. Eugene Gordon and Robert Carr, American writers, are represented in the fiction of the first four issues of 1934; and in the articles and criticism there are *Early American Labor and Literature* by Alan Calmer, Philip Rahv's *Marxist Criticism and Henry Hazlitt,* and an article on Jack Conroy by Anna Elistratova. I am not familiar with the policy of the magazine on the question of national representation, but one can conjecture that there is a statistical reason for this. The output of proletarian fiction is naturally greater in the Soviet Union than in any other country, and the stories are no doubt better on the average, because there is a more varied and universal revolutionary exprience there.

GERTRUDE DIAMANT

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THE COMING WRITERS CONGRESS

A CALL TO PARTICIPATE in a Writers Congress, to be held May 1, 1935, in New York City, is being sent to a number of American authors and will be published in various revolutionary and liberal publications. This call, which has been endorsed by Theodore Dreiser, Waldo Frank, Josephine Herbst, Michael Gold, Joseph Freeman, Robert Cantwell, Erskine Caldwell, Malcolm Cowley, Horace Gregory, and many others, is printed below.

This congress will represent a synthesis of the experiences of revolutionary literature in this country, and will clear the way for a wider and more systematic application of our problems. It will attempt to unite all writers who are against capitalism and who are endeavoring to create a new literature rooted in the dynamics of social development.

One of the richest sources of such experience is the activity of the John Reed Clubs which, during the past five years, have helped to build the foundation of a proletarian culture in America. At their last national Convention, the John Reed Clubs instructed their National Committee to work for such a broad, united Writers' Congress.

The editors of *Partisan Review* not only endorse this Congress but also offer the pages of this organ for a thorough discussion of the problems which will be analyzed at this gathering of proletarian and sympathetic authors. Essays dealing with the problems of style and theme, articles dealing with the general questions of the relationship of literature to society, as well as a discussion of the economic status of the artist under capitalism, will be among the subjects treated and should help to prepare the basis for sound discussion at the Congress. The very next issue of *Partisan Review* will contain a number of articles on the subjects enumerated. The call follows:

"The capitalist system crumbles so rapidly before our eyes that, whereas ten years ago scarcely more than a handful of writers were sufficiently far-sighted and courageous to take a stand for proletarian revolution, today hundreds of poets, novelists, dramatists, critics, short story writers and journalists recognize the necessity of personally helping to accelerate the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' government.

"We are faced by two kinds of problems. First, the problems of effective political action. The dangers of war and Fascism are everywhere

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apparent; we all can see the steady march of the nations towards war and the transformation of sporadic violence into organized fascist terror.

"The question is: how can we function most successfully against these twin menaces?

"In the second place, there are the problems peculiar to us as writers, the problems of presenting in our work the fresh understanding of the American scene that has come from our enrollment in the revolutionary cause. A new Renaissance is upon the world; for each writer there is the opportunity to proclaim both the new way of life and the revolutionary way to attain it. Indeed, in the historical perspective, it will be seen that only these two things matter. The revoluionary spirit in the ranks of the creative writers has made a beginning. This beginning must be victoriously carried forward.

"Many revolutionary writers live virtually in isolation, lacking opportunities to discuss vital problems with their fellows. Others are so absorbed in the revolutionary cause that they have few opportunities for thorough examination and analysis. Never have the writers of the nation come together for fundamental discussion.

"We propose, therefore, that a Congress of American revolutionary writers be held in New York City on May 1, 1935; that to this Congress shall be invited all writers who have achieved some standing in their respective fields; who have clearly indicated their sympathy to the revolutionary cause; who do not need to be convinced of the decay of capitalism, of the inevitability of revolution. Subsequently, we will seek to influence and win to our side those writers not yet so convinced.

"This Congress will be devoted to exposition of all phases of a writer's participation in the struggle against war, the preservation of civil liberties, and the destruction of fascist tendencies everywhere. It will develop the possibilities for wider distribution of revolutionary books and the improvement of the revolutionary press, as well as the relations between revolutionary writers and bourgeois publishers and editors. It will provide technical discussion of the literary applications of Marxist philosophy and of the relations between critic and creator. It will solidify our ranks.

"We believe such a Congress should create the League of American Writers, affiliated with the International Union of Revolutionary Writers. In European countries, the I.U.R.W. is in the vanguard of literature and political action. In France, for example, led by such men as Henri Barbusse, Romain Rolland, Andre Malraux, Andre Gide and Louis Aragon, it has been in the forefront of the magnificent fight of the united militant working class against Fascism.

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"The program for the League of American Writers would be evolved at the Congress, based on the following:

"Fight against imperialist war, defend the Soviet Union against Capitalist aggression;

'against Fascism, whether open or concealed;

"for the development and strengthening of the revolutionary labor movement;

"against white chauvinism (against all forms of Negro discrimination or persecution) and against the persecution of minority groups and of the foreign-born; solidarity with colonial people in their struggles for freedom;

"against the influence of bourgeois ideas in American literature;

"against the imprisonment of revolutionary writers and artists, as well as other class-war prisoners throughout the world.

"By its very nature our organization would not occupy the time and energy of its members in administrative tasks; instead, it will reveal, through collective discussion, the most effective ways in which writers, *as writers,* can function in the rapidly developing crisis."

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